Autobiographical Performances and Intimacy

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Submission for the award of MPhil

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September 2008

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to lend understanding to autobiographical performances that promote a closer relationship with the audience, whether they ask for the explicit participation of the audience or not. I will argue that autobiographical performances are understood through the *relation* between autobiography and intimacy and not intimacy or autobiography alone.

In the first chapter, I introduce the main issues and theories related to the performer-audience relation in autobiographical performances. Secondly, I introduce ideas on empathy, intersubjectivity and ethics. I also indicate how notions such as hospitality and listening sustain and support ideas of intimacy.

In the second chapter, I illustrate how these issues are addressed in practical terms. I examine how these issues are explored and worked out by the performer and how artistic practice can use and be informed by such theoretical inputs in order to help performers. I start this chapter by providing a brief account of the context in which my practical research was developed followed by a list of the key-moments of the research that I explore in greater depth and detail afterwards.

I conclude that intimacy is something the performer cannot control or predict but there are options the performer can make which help intimacy to emerge. In the case of the performance *Glasgow 4, the Name of all the Streets*, those options privileged and focussed on the autobiographical stories, and in the performer's ability in communicating those stories; in a refusal of a spectacular set or/and light design; and in a focus on the 'listening aspect' of the performance. All these decisions and options helped to draw attention to

the relational aspect of the performance and they have helped the performers and the audience to feel more intimate with each other.

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Acknowledgments

To Joana Craveiro and Tânia Guerreiro who encouraged me to come to Glasgow. To my parents Manuela Gil and Mário Viegas who made it possible. To Lúcia Ferro who travelled with me. To Alex Kelly and Dee Heddon who valued my research. To the performers and the artists who have contributed to this research: Catarina Varatojo, Pedro Silva, Susana Guardado, Miguel Bonneville, Flora Candeias, Nuno Rebelo, Tatiana Macedo, Adrian Howells, Nuno Gil, Juliette Mcdonald, Alistair MacDonald, Maxwell MacCarthy and John Cavanagh. To Kate Burton who edited the DVD.

And a very special thanks to Neil Davidson.

Introduction

My encounter with autobiography was as a practitioner, as a theatre director and as a performer. I started to work from autobiographical materials because I wanted to write my own texts and my life seemed a handy source of material. While performing myself and my life on stage I discovered that I could re-invent myself, re-invent my past, imagine my future, and construct myself in many different ways. However, what surprised me most was that during my performances I felt very connected and engaged with the audience and not only because I was sharing my life and exposing myself to strangers but because I felt as though I was having a strong reaction and response from the audience who seemed to be projecting through me and the performance, their own autobiographies, although this is of course speculative since I did not gather evidence scientifically nor is it my intention to make such a study of audience feedback. After each performance I would often stay talking informally with spectators who wanted to ask more questions about my stories but more often because they wanted to share their own experiences too. I found that this mattered to me as a performer and I started to become interested in this performer-audience relationship and its connection to autobiographical performances.

During this year I had the opportunity to devise and perform autobiographical performances which specifically searched for a closer relationship between the performer and the audience. My research supported this work by referencing texts on autobiographical performance, audience and applied ethics which I introduce in the first chapter.

In the second chapter, I illustrate how my practical explorations were guided by these same themes and by my research questions; I also demonstrate how these questions are addressed in practical terms; how they are explored and worked out by the performers and how artistic practice can use and be informed by such theoretical inputs. My research questions were:

- Is there a way of bringing intimacy into the process of devising an autobiographical performance?
- How will such a process influence/determine/increase the intimacy of the performance?
- What kind of particular writing devices can bring a closer relation between the audience and the performer?
- What are the implications in replacing the pronoun 'I' by the pronoun 'you' in an autobiographical text?
- What kind of intimate relation is being proposed in a one-to-one performance?
- Is it possible to have an intimate performance in a venue with two hundred people?
- How is performing to an audience of fifty people different from performing to an audience of two hundred people?
- Is it possible to achieve intimacy when performing outdoors?

Chapter 1

Autobiographical Performances

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the main issues and theories related to the performer-audience relation in autobiographical performances. I begin by situating my work within the field of autobiographical performance and outline my understanding of what constitutes an autobiographical performance. This leads to my explanation of the terms empathy, intersubjectivity, ethics, truth, authenticity, then on to concepts of memory, identity/ identities which brings in an examination of the devices used by artists to get closer to their audience including forms of address. This leads on to a general consideration of closeness and the associated risks that come with closeness. Afterwards, I will indicate how notions such as hospitality, ritual, seduction and listening are related through reference to Georges Bataille, Peggy Phelan and how these notions sustain and support ideas of intimacy. I then go on to explore the concept of listening through reference to Roland Barthes' essay *Listening*.

Convention demands that I situate my practice within the field of autobiographical and intimate performance as it exists in the world. Artists and groups such as Sophie Calle in France, Third Angel in the UK, Christian Boltanski, Laurie Anderson in the United States, Marina Abramovich from the Czech Republic and Lúcia Sigalho in Portugal would function in this way.
In terms of autobiographical material used as a source for subsequent work Sophie Calle, Christian Boltanski and Lúcia Sigalho present us with approaches

that play on the border between truth and fiction where the autobiographical subject is also hidden and sometimes disappears. In each case there is a significant distance between the biographical event and what we witness.

Abramovich on the other hand presents herself as the physical material of autobiography in the moment, often using her body and the limits of it. My approach, while concentrating on being physically present to the audience is far away from this in some respects but returns to biography through story telling which brings the story to presence through my own presence.

While this story telling might seem to situate me in close relation to Laurie Anderson's work which can be said to draw on intimacy for its effect I don't play the violin nor do I use any forms of ironic distancing in performance which seems to be one of the marks of her work.

The use of autobiographical materials in the work of the UK theatre company Third Angel is, I think, the closest to my practice since in their work the material is in some ways treated objectively almost like a found object while being presented in as subjective a way as is available to the performer(s).

However I find myself resistant to this convention. While not wishing to reduce the significance of these artists I want to question this canonizing approach in relation to a field of work which is about intimacy, autobiography and most importantly the encounter in the moment. I have never seen first-hand the work of these artists. For this reason the examples of work by other artists which I will cite in my thesis will be ones which I have witnessed first-hand. I want to prioritize my research into my practice and the encounters which came about through that research.

Empathy | Intersubjectivity | Ethics | Truth | Authenticity | Memory

In an autobiographical performance the performer stages her own life story and the audience is invited to watch. In this act of staging her own life the performer observes herself at the same time as she performs herself. This means that the performer is at the same time the subject and the object of the performance.[1] In this dialectic process of staging her life story the performer opens herself to observation by her audience. Consequently, the act of staging the performer's life is not only about the performer since the staging process also includes the audience. But what does 'including the audience' mean? Does it mean the audience also participates in the act of constructing the performer's life? How does the audience participate? In what ways does including the audience affect the performer and the performance?

In order to understand the relationship between the audience and the performer, I will start by introducing the notion of empathy.[2] All autobiographical performances work from the notion of empathy. By this I mean the capacity we have in recognizing and understanding another's state of mind or emotion. It is also characterized as the ability to 'put oneself in another's shoes'. When we watch the performer staging her life we can be said to be experiencing the outlook or emotions of another subject occurring within that subject as we watch. We are also experiencing the world through

[1] The autobiographical performer sees herself at the same time she plays herself; being at one moment the subject and the object of the performance.

[2] Empathy: "the ability to imagine oneself in the position of another person, and so to share and understand that person's feelings." (Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1992, p.333)

the eyes of another, the performer. The notion of empathy also relates to the notion of intersubjectivity,[3] which can be briefly defined as the sharing of subjectivity by two or more individuals.[4] This means that both performer and audience are bringing their personal perspectives, particularly feelings but also beliefs and desires, to the act of staging an autobiographical performance. Intersubjectivity is available to us through empathy because, by understanding the other, one is also experiencing the other. Moreover, in an 'intersubjective state' one experiences oneself as seen by the 'other': that is, I understand myself in relation to the gaze of the other. By staging her life the autobiographical performer is offering the audience the opportunity to 'put themselves in another's shoes' and to experience themselves through the performer's experiences. This could mean that the audience participates by merely recognizing themselves in the other which is not entirely the case. Through intersubjectivity one also experiences oneself as different and separate from the 'other' and at the same time available and given to her. The spectator, by projecting her/his own life stories into the 'autobiography-staging-process', is, on the one hand, differencing herself/himself from the performer and, on the other hand, making herself/himself available to experience the performer's perspective. Both concepts of empathy and intersubjectivity help us to understand that we and our lives are bound together and our individual stories are inseparable from the collective. It also helps us to understand that an audience, besides being the addressee of the

[3] Roland Barthes writes about an 'intersubjective space' which will allow the performer and the audience to leak their own individuality and their own artistic language into the performance. (Barthes, 1986)

[4] Subjectivity refers to a subject's perspective, particularly feelings, beliefs, and desires. It is often contrasted with objectivity. (Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1992, p.1054)

autobiographical performance, is a sharing partner along with the performer. This, potentially, brings a great sense of belonging when one is experiencing an autobiographical performance whether one is the performer or the audience, a feeling that one's life is a part of a larger whole. It also affirms the autobiographical performance as a two-way exchange between the performer and the audience. By saying that the audience also participates I do not want to undermine the intention of the autobiographical performer since, after all, she is the one who decided to stage her life story and has invited us to watch. But it does challenge the idea that the audience is merely a passive observer when in fact they are active participants. Furthermore, it also challenges the idea that an autobiographical performance is something merely personal when, in fact, it is an act of sharing subjectivities.

Adrian Howells is a performing artist based in the UK whose work, besides being autobiographical and confessional, also reflects on this idea of intersubjectivity. In an interview with Rupert Smith, he describes his work:

> There is a lot of talking and a lot of touching. And it's as much about the other person as it is about me. I focused on the idea of a two-way exchange. (Smith, 2008, p.28)

Howells' latest performance, *Foot Washing for the Sole* (2008) reflected the two-way exchange idea. The spectator, besides receiving a foot massage and listening to Howells' confessions, was invited to give back her/his own confessions and personal stories which, in turn, became part of the performance. This two-way exchange may lead us to think that intersubjectivity only happens if the audience explicitly participates but, as in the above case, when the performer is offering a sharing of moments of her own lived experience, the audience also gives back by projecting themselves

into what is being told and staged. Alan Read in *Theatre and the Everyday Life: an Ethics of Performance* says:

> The presence of an audience is a defining characteristic of the person, becoming performer. Without their presence in time that transformation would not take place as expression but would remain in the therapeutic, private domain. It would here remain meditative rather than expressive. (Read, 1993, p.93)

In *Feminism and Autobiography*, Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield distinguish two different forms of intersubjectivity in autobiography. The first, the one I outlined above, is related to the two-way exchange between audience and performer and the second is related between the performer, and the other people she is evoking on stage. This second notion of intersubjectivity is related to the fact that, whenever we stage an autobiography, we are, in fact, staging an auto/biography.[5] Paul John Eakin says:

> Because our own lives never stand free of the lives of others, we are faced with our responsibility to those others whenever we write about ourselves. There is no escaping this responsibility. (in Heddon, 2008, p.16)

Likewise, every time the autobiographical performer is staging her life story, she is always staging the lives of others too. Eakin shows that our lives are not isolated islands but that they are forever bound to the lives of others. This turns the act of staging one life into an act of staging other lives. Performing autobiography becomes performing biography which consequently makes it an auto/biographical act. I, as an auto/biographical performer, ask

[5] Some authors use the term 'auto/biography' to underline the fact that, when one is writing (performing) an autobiography one is always referencing other people and their lives and consequently writing (performing) a biography. I am only using the term 'auto/biography' in this section (page) to introduce and underline this notion. However, an 'autobiography' will be always an 'auto/biography' even if it is not written like this.

myself very often what right I have in staging other people's lives. Shall I seek authorization from the people I am talking about? Why would I need to do that? Does that mean that I should subsequently portray those people in a certain way? In such a way that they feel good about it? But is there a 'good' way of being 'portrayed'? What does 'good' mean in this context? Consequently, what does 'bad' mean? And who decides? This is clearly what Eakin meant when he said that 'there is no escaping'. The autobiographical performer will always be confronted with the notion of responsibility. This leads to further notions of responsibility such as that of the performer's accountability towards the person she is talking about. Or the fact of being in a position to explain the other, of providing an account for the other. Ultimately, these concerns are based on notions of authority and control and the agency the performer has in choosing what she wants to tell about herself and consequently, about other people's lives. We could disingenuously say that since an autobiographical performance is about the performer's life and not about the others' lives, the fact that the performer is telling these stories about others is merely a consequence of autobiography and not the point of the performance itself. But that is indeed naive. The issue of responsibility in auto/biographical performance is not merely a personal issue but one that concerns ethical relations. Alan Read writes:

> Ethics is not divorced from political purposes, but is rather a theory of the social duties of the individual. (Read, 1993, p.88)

In *Autobiography and Performance* Deirdre Heddon introduces the problem of ethics in relation to autobiographical performances by arguing:

> I come to the question of ethics not as a moral philosopher but as a practitioner and a spectator and the questions I ask here have

> announced themselves in the auditorium and in the practice studio where I have experienced ethical challenges. My application of the term 'ethics' is anchored within this lived space, and not in the realm of abstraction. (Heddon, 2008, p.125)

When Heddon uses the word ethics she is talking about people working things out, meeting challenges posed by different subjects in close proximity. Ethics in relation to autobiographical performance is not just about abstract concepts being applied critically to the work. On the contrary, since autobiographical performances happen live in the present, ethical relations become framed in the realm of the performance. This has the effect of incorporating the conceptual and abstract into the ethical responsibilities of an individual, in this case, the performer and/with the audience.

Heddon acknowledges the fact that some autobiographical performers (especially those performers who address the audience directly) admit that, most of the time, they are also staging other people's lives. By doing this the performer is explicitly and deliberately saying that she is conscious of the fact that she is staging other lives. And some performers actually use an 'authentic proof' such as an object, a video, an interview, a photograph, a person in order to state that what they are staging is a part of someone else's real life and that they are aware of it. Heddon also notes that some forms of autobiographical performances such as verbatim drama specifically focus on the staging of others' lives as a way of giving voice to the other which for Heddon challenges the assumption that an autobiographical performance is

normally a self-centred and a solipsistic act. [6] However, the autobiographical performer acknowledges the fact that she is accounting for the other. Even if she gives voice to that same other, the autobiographical performer cannot be excused from responsibility by the fact that she is telling other people's lives. If we go back to Eakin's notion of responsibility we understand that staging the other is related to the problematic and to the legitimacy one has in telling about the other, and with the ways one is portraying that same other: whether one is making a 'sincere' portrait, whether one is telling what 'really' happened in relation to the other. And it is precisely this issue of what is 'real' and 'true' upon which the question of responsibility hangs; the assumption that an autobiographical performance has to tell the 'truth' and consequently tell the 'truth' about the other.

One of Leonora Champagne's students, after an autobiographical performance, said:

> What do you mean, her mother didn't really die? That's outrageous! She manipulated us! (Champagne, 1999, p. 157)

People often ask me after a performance if what I spoke of was 'really true', if I 'really did what I said I did' or if that person 'really exists'. I also know that whatever answer I give is doomed to failure: if I say it is true, they will immediately get suspicious and think I am lying; if I say that 'it is true but not quite the truth', they, like Champagne's student, will feel cheated and betrayed. The point is that autobiographical performances are, as Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson say, "acts of remembering" (Smith and Watson, 2005,

[6] *Verbatim Theatre,* is as Deirdre Heddon explains "a form of theatre which places interviews with people at the heart of its process." (Heddon, 2008, p.127) In the USA it is also known as theatre of testimony or documentary theatre (Grace, S. & Wasserman, J., 2006).

p. 9), therefore subjected to 'memory' and to 'subjective truth'. Memory is frequently subjected to omission and interpretation which locates the act of remembering somewhere in between the real events and their embellishment. The subjective truth is the truth that is valid for me and which is related to my present feelings. What becomes important to the autobiographical performer are not the facts about the past but the present feelings the performer has about that same past. In addition, memory itself has a history. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *Interfaces - Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance* propose that:

> We learn how to remember, what to remember, and the uses of remembering, all of which are specific to our cultural and historical location. And that history is material. We locate memory and specific practices of remembering in our own bodies and in specific objects of our experimental histories. (Smith and Watson, 2005, p.9)

What Smith and Watson mean is that, when the performer stages her life story, she is not only constructing memory, she is also performing how she herself is constructed by her cultural and historical location. As Deb Margolin said in her article 'Count the I's, the Autobiographical Nature of Everything':

> What I see is a direct product of my ability to see. (Margolin, 1999, p.24)

What becomes important in this act of remembering is not the objective truth, the facts, the accurate representation of the performer's life story and consequently of the story of others; what becomes important is the creative act of staging that same past. Christian Boltanski, in an interview about his work, says:

> In my early work I pretended to speak about my childhood, yet my real childhood had disappeared. I have lied about it so often that I no longer have a real memory of this time, and my childhood has become, for

> me, some kind of universal childhood, not a real one. Everything you do is a pretence. My life is about making stories (Boltanski, 2005, p. 37)

Again I do not pretend to lessen the responsibility which an auto/biography involves and what Eakin acknowledged before. But as we can see from Boltanski, the act of remembering oscillates between something with the aura of truth and an idea of being closer to some sort of reality through autobiographical construction which does not pretend to represent the 'truth'.

Furthermore, the notion of truth implies within itself a notion of being sincere. Charles Guignon's *On Being Authentic* explains that the question of telling the truth and being sincere is in fact a social virtue and not a personal virtue; 'Tell the truth' becomes important in relation to the society and the social roles one wants and is expected to perform. In this sense the 'truth' becomes also a construction, something which is socially and culturally constructed. More recently, the issue of truth has been replaced by the issue of 'authenticity' or of being authentic, where the focus is placed not on the objective truth, in relation to facts, but on the individual person; in auto/biographical performances what becomes important is to be true to oneself. Throughout his text, Guignon challenges this contemporary appeal for authenticity showing that the contemporary notion of authenticity is also a social virtue. He says:

> It is clear that being authentic is not just a matter of concentrating on one's own self, but also involves deliberation about how one's commitments make a contribution to the good of the public world in which one is a participant. So authenticity is a personal undertaking insofar as it entails personal integrity and responsibility for self. But it also has a social dimension insofar as it brings with it a sense of belongingness and indebtedness to the wider social contexts that make it possible. (Guignon, 2004, p.163)

Finally, the possibility of playing with memory, whether the performer is remembering, imagining, inventing, constructing or re-enacting it, is indeed one of the potentials of autobiographical performances: they offer the possibility of the 'reconstitution' of the performer's past and identity. Because the performer has control over the self-representations she is producing about herself, she gains agency over her life story and identity. Some performers use this tool as a way of rendering visible particular traumatic episodes or even identities that have been historically, socially, culturally and politically silenced and/or marginalised. In these cases, autobiographical performances become acts of public confession and testimony where the performer explicitly reveals what has been repressed and silenced. Therefore, the performance turns into a process of healing, of curing and becoming well. The performance becomes an act of repair. And as we have seen before the audience has an active role in this act of repair, not only because they react to it, as witnesses, but because they are potentially projecting their own silenced, repressed or marginalised stories and identities. Adrian Howells says:

> Whatever I do I want to send people away feeling good physically and mentally. I want them to feel cleansed. (Smith, 2008, p. 28)

Or as Miller and Taylor put it:

> Creating an autobiographical narrative reconstitutes the self, the audience, and surrounding cultural contexts. It makes sense of the self, gives each part a voice and a body. We can safely say until a life is shared through writing a performance, it does not exist at all, or at least it does not resonate in the broader realm of public consequence. (Miller, Taylor and Carver, 2003, p.3)

An autobiographical performance then offers the chance to be closer to others, to be closer to their stories, which are also our stories; a chance to peep into the other's past and personal lives without fear of getting caught; a chance to be allied with others because in looking to their stories we understand our own stories; a chance to be intimate with strangers because we listen and share the most private secrets; a chance to dialogue with others understanding our similarities and differences; a chance to provoke others to action because if she did it, I can also do it; a chance to stir others with our lives and with our identities. However, if autobiographical performance has the *potential* to offer all this, it also might not necessarily work out this way. It is a performance and is subject to risk. It is happening 'now'. It is connected to temporality and contingency. A performance can go wrong and one can also experience (on either side) a 'bad' performance. However, the already stated positive attributes show us how autobiographical performance engages with issues such as intersubjectivity, responsibility, memory and truths particularly in relation to the other (meaning the audience) and the people they also evoke in the act of staging an auto/biography.

Identity | Identities | Closeness | Risk

I would like now to explore how autobiographical performances deal with identities and how this also offers the possibility of 'stirring others with our identities'. What is implied by 'identities'? In what ways can the performer stage 'identities'? What is the relationship between autobiographical performances and identity?

Identities are not circumscribed by autobiographical performances. In our lives we often choose how to present ourselves and what to present: the way we dress, the way we style our hair, the way we construct our CV, the way we speak, the way we pick a particular moment of our life to talk about ourselves, and so on. Richard Schechner proposes that 'performance is everywhere' (Schechner, 2003), while Deb Margolin notes that 'everything is autobiographical' (Margolin, 1999). Erving Goffman, in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, said that all social interactions are staged and that we all perform our social roles showing different *personas* and different *masks*. What Goffman also shows is that the way we present ourselves, the way we perform our many roles, is related to how we want others to see us. This shows that the sense of ourselves, our identities, is dependable to a certain extent on others. This helps us to introduce the idea that there is no such thing as an isolated identity or self, that our identities only exist within the social and that we all are inscribed in a particular social and cultural order. Therefore, besides choosing how we want to be seen in our daily lives, we also embody how a particular social and cultural environment sees/inscribes us. 'Identities' are, therefore, not only related to what identifies us as individuals, our comprehension of our unique characteristics such as, for example, our own name; but they are also related to a condition of sameness, of being the same or sharing similar characteristics such as the language one particular group of people speak. This might give the impression that 'identities' are things that come to us already made by our culture, that we are all culturally and linguistically conditioned, but the fact is that we can also make choices, we are active agents and performers in the formation of

identities. Although it is impossible to choose the place one wants to be born or the language one wants to speak first; it is possible to choose other languages to speak, change our sex, change our name, including the family name. Therefore, identities are not only products of our cultural and social background, they are also products of our individual choices within the same cultural and social order in which we live.

Besides the roles we perform daily we also embody ready made roles provided by our cultural and social background which are also in a constant process of change, as we can see by the language we speak as it alters and mutates across time. Identities too, therefore, are nor fixed or permanent or concise as they are also in constant flux. As Smith and Watson argue:

> Identities materialize within collectives and out of the cultural marked differences that constitute symbolic interactions within and between collectivities. But social organizations and symbolic interactions are always in flux. Identities, therefore, are discursive, provisional, intersectional, and unfixed. (Smith and Watson, 2005, p.10)

Consequently, the way we perform our identities and the masks we wear also change because our identities are in permanent flux. Autobiographical performances illustrate, on the one hand, how we are socially and culturally constructed and, on the other hand, show how we have the capacity to challenge those same identity formations and the values favoured by the dominant surrounding culture. In the dialectical process of an autobiographical performance, where the performer sees herself at the same time as she plays herself (being at one moment the subject and the object), the performer realizes the representation she is making of her self and how she is culturally conditioned but at the same time, since the performer has

agency over that same representation she can choose the way she wants to represent herself.

This process of staging an autobiography is often compared to the model of identity formation created by Jacques Lacan, called the mirror stage, which allows the performer to see oneself as another while the performance itself, like language, becomes a way of understanding the gap or split between the performer/subject and the performer/object.[7] The model proposed by Lacan reinforces the idea that identity is not something fixed or biologically given but is relational, is enacted in interaction with an-other outside oneself, the performed performer or the audience. We have seen above how autobiographical performances negotiate such notions as empathy and intersubjectivity. What Lacan also reinforces with the mirror stage model is that subjectivity is bound up with a vision of 'otherness', that we only understand ourselves in relation to another (even if that other is ourselves). Herbert Blau in *The Audience* presents this fundamental Lacanian relation with another calling it "an initial act of spectatorship" (Blau, 1990, p.65).

Therefore, we might assume that, instead of staging her life, the performer is presenting the 'choices' she made in the autobiographical process, that in fact we are watching a version of the performer and not the

[7] In this mirror stage, the child sees itself in a mirror (i.e. other people and objects) and two phenomena occur, from one side the child recognizes itself as an entity but at the same time mistakes itself for another. Elizabeth Grosz explains: "The subject recognizes itself at the moment it loses itself in/as the other. The other is the foundation and support of its identity, as well as what destabilizes or annihilates it." (Smith & Watson, 1998, p.18) The child's self is built in this process where, as Lacan says: "the visible me is determined by the look that is outside me". (Steiner & Yang, 2004, p.28) After this stage, through language, the symbolic and social order, the child will learn to symbolize the split in her/his forever inaccessible identity. Consequently, and as Smith and Watson recognize, "Lacan proposes, the coherent, autonomous self is indeed a fictive construct, a fantasy of the fully present subject in language." (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 18)

performer herself. But why do we then tend to say that we are watching a version of the performer and not the performer herself? This desire of wanting to see 'the performer' is no doubt related to the assumption mentioned earlier that an autobiography must provide 'the truth' but also bound up with a modern conception of the self where, as Guignon noted, the self is seen as a fixed, centred and essential self (Guignon, 2004). We have seen that even in our daily lives, one performs many versions of oneself and those identities are in constant transit. The making of an autobiographical performance is also an act of sharing, questioning and re-identifying the performer through many versions of herself. However, in the world of literature the autobiographer has been constructed as a centred self who looks back on how she was shaped over the years. Moreover, the literary concept Philippe Lejeune identified as 'the autobiographical pact', reinforces this notion of an essential self by denoting an implicit 'contract' which establishes a sameness of identity between author, narrator and protagonist which has to be accepted by the reader (Lejeune, 1986). In *Theatre and Autobiography* Sherrill Grace notes:

> As Lejeune explains, when we sign on to this pact we expect to be told the truth about someone's life, we believe that the people we encounter are real. (Grace and Wasserman, 2006, p.16)

We have seen how truth is, in fact, a social and a cultural construction changing across time and we have seen that autobiographical performances do not provide us with the truth as such (because that is an impossibility), but can offer us 'creative truths' and we have also seen that our identities are not fixed but are in constant flux and that the self is indeed a fictive construction, something we play with in our daily lives and something the

performer plays with on the stage. Sherill Grace in her article 'Performing the autobiographical pact', writes:

> Lejeune's pact is to say that we (the reader/ watcher/ listener) believe what the autobiographer tells us to be true, and if we discover that it is not true, we feel cheated, deceived and manipulated. But theatre is by definition illusion, make believe, never to be mistaken for reality. (Kadar, Warley, Perreault, Egan, 2005, p.69)

As Grace acknowledges, staging an autobiography is framed in the realm of art, and autobiography, although it plays with the boundaries of art and life, is a representation of life and is representational. Moreover, besides the trilogy of 'author/director', 'narrator/performer', 'protagonist/character' proposed by Lejeune the performer also brings her persona[8] to the stage which destabilizes the trilogy proposed by Lejeune: to perform autobiography becomes an interpretation of one's own life story with the performer/author functioning in multiple roles of producing, writing, interpreting, performing her character's and/or persona.

As Smith and Watson say:

> They [autobiographical acts] are inescapably material and embodied. They cannot be understood as individualist acts of a sovereign subject, whole and entire unto itself. And the representation produced cannot be taken as a guarantee of a "true self," authentic, coherent, and fixed. (Smith and Watson, 2005, p.11)

Most performers recognize in this act of re-invention and exploring multiple identities one of the great potentials of autobiographical performances. In the process of re-inventing herself the performer uses devices such as the creation of alter egos or tries to render herself invisible.

[8] Persona literally means 'mask', although it does not usually refer to a literal mask but to the 'social mask' all humans supposedly wear. In this case I am using the term to refer to 'the way' the performer presents herself on stage in front of an audience. (Pavis, 1998)

These examples may seem contradictory since an autobiographical performance is about the performer as herself on stage, but in fact they reinforce an idea of being closer to the audience at the same time as the performer is re-inventing herself. Adrian Howells, who created Adrienne, "the sympathetic slightly brassy woman you can tell anything to, she'll make you a cup of tea and share all your troubles" (Smith, 2008, p.28), says about his alter-ego:

> The whole Adrienne thing was a way of developing the confessional style, of creating instant intimacy and trust – but even though I think of her as a woman, she's not a character as such. Adrienne is a heightened version of me that allows me to get out there and meet the audience. (Smith, 2008, p.29)

Similarly I have used devices which enable me to get closer to an audience while at the same time creating distance from myself. In my last performance, *Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets*, I have employed a strategy very common in literature where instead of speaking about myself using the pronoun "I", I would use the pronoun "you". According to Lejeune's pact this "you" would be the *you*-author, the *you*-performer and the *you*-protagonist but as we have seen, we should also add the *you*-performer's persona and in this case the *you*-audience, since when I use the pronoun 'you' I am explicitly implicating the audience in the performance, positioning each audience member in the character of the text by using direct address.

These sorts of devices not only have the effect Howells noted of getting the performer closer to the audience but they also have the effect of reinforcing notions of empathy and intersubjectivity which, as we saw above, are fundamental to all autobiographical performances. An extract of the *Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets*, reads:

> The first thing you feel like doing when you arrive in this city is to run away. Get on a plane a bus a taxi just go leave. Then you start looking for signs so you look in all sorts of places gardens hidden benches riverside walks underground stations buses phone booths small cafes. You look for specific clues traces special details hidden messages. You notice there is always someone in the middle of a bridge waiting. And you too you go to the middle of the bridge and you wait you wait you wait but nobody comes. And then you see a huge grey cloud coming towards you. So you run you run you run through the city you run home but there is no home besides your trolley your laptop your bag with your purse with your money with your cards, that's home. (Gil, 2007)

In both *Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets* and Howells' use of 'Adrienne', we may assume that becoming closer to an-other - the audience - is something fundamentally 'good'; that including the audience is something desirable in performance; that the audience will not feel intimidated by the performer's closeness; that the audience desires to participate in the performance. We are again in the realm of ethics but this time I am introducing it in relation to the intersubjectivity which happens between a performer and an audience. Once again, autobiographical performances are firstly performances, they happen 'here' and 'now' and between 'me' and 'you'. Performing is always performing to someone, to another and consequently we are encapsulated in our responsibility for and obligation to that same other which is the audience. When Howells says that he wants to gain the audience's trust and become intimate with the audience in order to confess his autobiographical stories we could ask if the empathy we have mentioned earlier is not only a mere mechanism Howells is using in order to see his stories accepted by the audience. Moreover when I use the pronoun 'you', explicitly transforming the audience into the subject of the text and therefore placing them in my personal stories, we could ask if that is not only a mechanism to lead the audience to accept my stories, to accept my life, to

accept myself; a mechanism to reduce the audience to a version of myself. Encounters between performers and audiences unavoidably bring about questions of reducing the other, of objectifying the other, of wanting the other to become a version of ourselves. Writing about Emmanuel Levinas, whose philosophy was deeply concerned with the ethics of the encounter with the other, Alan Read says:

> The question of how one conducts oneself in relation to the other, how one behaves, is a first philosophy, the precondition for life and the exchange between lives that I assert is theatre's domain. (Read, 1993, p.93)

Although my objective is not to undermine the performer's intention of getting closer to the audience, the implications it brings are useful to understand autobiographical performances and autobiographical performers who specifically seek and construct closeness in their work. Nevertheless we can see the other side of the coin which this act of closeness proposes, that in fact Howells is getting closer in order to let the audience feel protected and safe so they too can participate in the performance, transforming the performance into an opportunity for the audience to also express themselves, their subjectivities, their stories, their lives. In the act of opening themselves to the audience the performer is breaking his self-contained identity, sense of security, is becoming vulnerable and, therefore, more open to recognising the other and consequently accepting the other: the audience in its otherness. Furthermore, the question of getting closer raises and prioritises the importance of the moment or event, the 'here' and 'now'. It confirms that what is happening involves real people providing a strong sense of the

uniqueness of the performance but also a realization of how one can shape and understand the performance and by implication the world.

In the act of getting closer most performers directly address the audience speaking as 'themselves', unbalancing theatrical conventions such as the 'fourth wall' and in some sense destroying the theatrical convention known as the aesthetic distance.[9] We could say that the fact that the audience is getting too close might compromise the 'sacredness' of the performance and blur the distinction between stage and audience and as a consequence blur the distinction between art and life. Indeed we have seen how all autobiographical performances work to negotiate these boundaries, between art and life. The act of getting closer also implies risk, whether by opening up to an audience, or by getting physically too close to an audience the performer becomes vulnerable, she risks herself. In the interview-article 'Risk in Intimacy', Adrian Heathfield explores this idea of risk in relation to the work of the UK performing artist Bobby Baker whose work besides being autobiographical also addresses ideas of intimacy and being closer to the audience. Bobby Baker says:

> My interest in risk is quite different. I am sometimes working in very close proximity to small audiences, so that I'm actually capable of leaning over and touching their cheek and spooning strawberry jam into their eagerly opened mouths. The kind of transgression I am after is very slight, but nonetheless present. The danger is there in small gestures rather than larger ones: the risk in intimacy, that's what interests me… (Baker and Barrett, 2007, p.88)

[9] Aesthetic distance can be understood as the frame of reference that an artist creates by the use of technical devices in and around the work of art to differentiate it psychologically from reality. (Pavis, 1998)

As we have seen, the idea of intersubjectivity is related to the idea of a two-way exchange between performer and audience, therefore the notion of risk applies both ways. It is not only the performer who can put the audience in a position of risk by playing and crossing boundaries of art and life, the performer can in turn be put at risk by the audience who is also crossing those same boundaries on their own terms.

Relationship | Ritual | Seduction | Hospitality | Listening

We can now say that this closeness is useful in autobiographical performance in that it draws attention to the intersubjective relations between performer and audience. The focus of such performances is not on the performer's life story but in the relational aspect between the autobiographical performer and the audience. That is why ethics becomes a central element when we try to understand these performances because they specifically focus on the encounter that takes place between the autobiographical performer and the audience.

The purpose of this research is to lend understanding to autobiographical performances that search for intimacy, whether they do this by promoting a closer relationship with the audience, whether they ask for the explicit participation of the audience or not. Autobiographical performances are understood through the *relation* between autobiography and intimacy and not intimacy or autobiography alone.

Georges Bataille notes:

> [Humankind] is afraid of the intimate order that is not reconcilable with the order of things… [I]ntimacy, in the trembling of the individual, is holy, sacred, and suffused with anguish. (Auslander, 2008, p.53)

Although we are specifically looking for the relationship between autobiographical performances and intimacy it is not possible to speak about intimacy without mentioning George Bataille whose writings introduce two opposite notions; the first one is the 'order of intimacy' or the sacred world where there is no distinction between selves or objects and there is no self-consciousness. The 'order of intimacy' is in the realm of animality and chaos; as an opposite there is the 'order of things' which for Bataille is our ordinary world, the 'order of things' is in the realm of humanity. For Bataille humanity *longs* for the 'order of intimacy' which has been lost. For Bataille it is through sacred and profane rituals and/or sacrifices that the 'intimate order' can be restored. If we consider Howells' last performance, *Foot Washing for the Sole*, where Howells washed the feet of a member of the audience, ending the performance by kissing the spectator's feet, we find that it resonates immediately with Bataille's suggestion or prophecy that rituals will restore the 'order of intimacy' that we long for. It is curious to note that when Howells performed his piece in Glasgow the places he chose to give the massage were churches or buildings which were once churches. Although Bataille's notion of intimacy goes much further, plunging into questions of blood, profanity, sacrifices, festivals and carnivals it is important to reference it in order to mark a possible relationship between autobiographical performances and a longed for intimacy.

Peggy Phelan says:

> Half-way between seduction which removes the visible apparatus of desire and production which displays it, theatre operates in a curious psychic space. The “secret” of theatre’s power is dependent up on the “truth” of its illusion. Enfolded within fiction, theatre seeks to display the line between visible and invisible power. Theatre has, then, an intimate relationship with the secret. And secrets contain within them the aroma of seduction. (Phelan, 1993, p.112)

Phelan’s extract broadens the notion of intimacy towards notions of desire and seduction. She also uses those expressions to refer to the hidden secrets and powers of theatre where oppositions such as ‘truth’ and ‘illusion’, ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ are explored. We have seen how autobiographical performances play within the boundaries of truth and fiction, between what is said/visible and what is hidden/invisible, between art and life. What is also suggested by Phelan is that theatre is implicitly a domain of seduction. When we speak about intersubjectivity, getting closer to the audience, sharing the personal we are also noting that seduction is happening between the performer and the audience, a seduction which hides a struggle for power and agency on the part of the audience. Autobiographical performances which seek a closer relationship between the performer and the audience might be said to seduce but this sits uncomfortably with the strong sense of hospitality that some performances seem to have, a sense of welcoming the audience. This idea of welcoming strangers seems apparently contradictory since one normally understands being intimate with someone as being with someone known and not with strangers. If we look for a moment to the etymological root of the word hospitality we discover that it derives from the Latin ‘hospes’, which is formed from ‘hostis’, which originally meant a 'stranger'; hospitality is about compensating and equalizing a stranger to the state of the host making her/him feel protected and taken care of. In this context we can

use the term ‘hospitality’ to mean attending to the space in which the audience will engage and offering a relation with the audience which is welcoming. As we have seen, some of these autobiographical performances offer hospitality in order to become closer to the audience because if one feels well received by someone, one is potentially more available to that same person and that is where ‘seduction’ as well as ‘listening’ come in.
It would be easy to overlook the importance of listening but it is essential to performance. When one speaks in a performance one assumes that someone is listening. When one stops speaking one also assumes that listening continues and becomes expectant, that the listener expects something else to be said. I want to go on now to explore what these listening and speaking roles might mean within the intersubjective relation.
Roland Barthes writes:

> Hearing is a physiological phenomenon; listening is a psychological act. (Barthes, 1986, p.245)

Barthes essay ‘Listening’ alludes to the fact that the audience ‘listens’ to the stories of the autobiographical performer. Why ‘listening’ and not ‘seeing’ for example? Why focus on what is being said and not in what is being seen on stage?

In his essay Barthes introduces different types of listening: the ‘alert’ listening which might happen for instance whenever an animal listens to a possible noise from its prey; the ‘deciphering’ listening which is exemplified when a child tries to hear certain signs which may correspond to the approach of its mother and another type of listening which for Barthes does not aim or

wait for specific signs to be said or emitted but focuses on who the speaking subject/performer is and who the listening/audience is. Barthes writes:

> Such listening is supposed to develop in an inter-subjective space where "I am listening" also means "listen to me" (Barthes, 1986, p.246)
> Interpellation leads to an interlocution in which the listener's silence will be as active as the locutor's speech: listening speaks. (Barthes, 1986, p.252)

First, by declaring that listening is an active role Barthes also states that as one listens to another, one is implicitly saying 'listen to me'. Barthes also evokes an 'intersubjective space' between the one who speaks and the one who listens. Is not this 'intersubjective space' equivalent to the two-way exchange happening between the performer and the audience? Is not the audience projecting their own personal stories at the same time as it is listening to the performer and thereby saying 'listen to me'? In sum, as Barthes put it, 'listening speaks'. From this point of view listening brings a great sense of immediacy to the performance, a feeling of being closer to another and also resonates with a fundamental aspect of a performance, its temporality: listening brings a great sense of 'being in the moment' and aligns the listener with the performance 'here' and 'now'. Barthes says:

> Hearing seems essentially linked to evaluation of the spatio-temporal situation. (…) Based on hearing, listening (from an anthropological viewpoint) is the very sense of space and of time. (Barthes, 1986, p.246)

We may tend to think that the act of listening is only related to what is said verbally but as Phelan wrote, "theatre's domain" involves at the same time what is being said but also what is 'said' inaudibly since it is not literally

expressed by words or sounds. This reinforces the sense of awareness or as Barthes put it:

> An attitude of decoding what is obscure, blurred, or mute. (Barthes, 1986, p.246)

Listening implies two or more subjects in relation with each other and consequently emphasizes the relational aspect of an autobiographical performance because listening implies a two-way exchange not only because the audience listens but because their listening also speaks. In the end of his essay Barthes alludes to the fact that we cannot force someone to listen and as we need freedom to speak so we also need freedom to listen and this is where hospitality comes in. Making the other feel welcome is important. By listening to the audience the performer is actively giving space to the audience just as speaking to the audience is welcoming. Having been welcomed in this way the audience can listen comfortably and consequently can 'speak' through listening as well.

Therefore, we could say that all of these autobiographical performances potentially work with different levels of intimacy. A first intimacy could be based on the act of offering hospitality in welcoming the stranger; a second intimacy could be based on the autobiographical nature of the material the performer is revealing on stage, allowing the audience to witness her most personal details; a third intimacy could be based on the two-way exchange where the audience responds and gives back to the performer. In this sense, autobiography is seen as a key which opens the door to a place where the encounter between the host/performer and the stranger/audience occurs. But we could also question the assumptions that the above

considerations are making, that being closer and intimate is something fundamentally good, that it is possible to be intimate with a stranger, that intimacy is private and not public when we know performance happens publicly, that intimacy is being nearer and not far, that because we see the performer staging her life it suggests we have an intimate relation with the person performer, that the audience will feel better because they are intimate with the performer therefore that intimacy is not intimidating, that intimacy is related to words like sharing, offering, giving, welcoming, and hospitality, that intimacy understands the presence of the other.

Chapter 2

Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets

> Having explored and experimented with our practice, what is it exactly that we wish to contribute to research, share and disseminate with others? Is it the tool of a new performance vocabulary or a research process of practice that enables us to create and engage more freely and intelligently with our own work and therefore, develop a body of knowledge? Is it beneficial to integrate and appropriate others' methodologies to further our own understanding? Is this just a method by which to set criteria to determine what is "right" in research and practice? Depending on the research context, the development of models of best practice may inform decisions about my experimentation, but exploration will always be intuitive and implicit in the process of practical research. (Oddey, A., 2002, p.3-4)

Glasgow 4, the Name of All the Streets is the title of my one year practical research project as an MPhil student in the Theatre, Film and Television Studies department in the University of Glasgow. The methodology I have chosen to develop my research is practice based and my first task was to devise performances in which to frame my research questions.

Why a practice based methodology? On one hand I rely on my own personal and professional background in that I have been a working practitioner both as performer and theatre director. I also draw on my work as a drama teacher. On the other hand, a practice based methodology makes it possible for theory and practice to go hand in hand: informing, creating, performing and challenging the work.

In *Performance Practice and Process*, Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris introduce the expression 'embodied knowledge' when "we literally came to understand something we thought we already knew, 'differently', in ways

that involved the body as well as the mind." (Aston, E. and Harris, G. 2008, p.9) In a like manner the practice based methodology offered me not only the possibility to better inform my practice but also to 'embody knowledge' through my practical, physical and material explorations. Such embodied knowledge extended the theoretical knowledge.

We have seen in the first chapter that autobiographical performances which promote a closer relationship between the performer and the audience inevitably focus on issues such as empathy, intersubjectivity, hospitality and ethics. The purpose of this chapter is to understand how these issues are addressed in practical terms. I want to examine how these issues are explored and worked out by the performer and how artistic practice can use and be informed by such theoretical inputs in order to help performers. In this chapter I start by providing a brief account of the context in which my practice was developed followed by a list of the key-moments of the research which I explore in greater depth and detail afterwards. Once again the objective of this research is not only to understand intimacy or autobiographical performance alone but to understand the relationship between them as it exists in performance.

Though my research has been developed within the Theatre, Film and Television Studies department of the University of Glasgow the performance *Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets*, had a history and a particular context. At the same time as I was starting my research I was commissioned to devise a piece for the Gulbenkian Creativity and Artistic Creation Programme of the Gulbenkian Foundation in Portugal. This programme offers professional artists the opportunity to study and develop their individual

work. In an early stage of this programme the artists were invited to attend a course run by Third Angel, a theatre company based in the UK. The course focused on devising experimental theatre and live art and at the same time aimed to provide an alternative to text based theatre performances, providing new ways of creating work, using alternative starting points besides text and encouraging collaboration and experimentation among practitioners using different forms and spaces. In the second stage of the programme I had the opportunity to develop my own work by staging a half hour piece. Since the period in which we were to devise this piece coincided with the beginning of my research, the two projects became one, not only for practical reasons - because they coincided in time - but because it presented me with an opportunity to expand and explore my research while allowing my academic research to inform and develop my work.

Throughout the year I also had the opportunity to present the resulting performance in different contexts which was a way of developing and deepening my research especially since the contexts of those performances (theatres, outdoor space, and so on) offered new challenges and new insights into my research whether because the performance was going to be presented in a different venue or because it presented a different spatial relation with the audience. The following list introduces the key-moments of the research project which I will focus on in greater detail afterwards.

Key-moments:

1. The beginning of the creative process;
2. The performance of writing a letter;

3. The one-to-one performances:
4. The Gulbenkian performance;
5. The Gilmorehill performance;
6. The outdoor performance;
7. The studio performance;
8. The solo performance.

The Beginning of the Creative Process

> Research questions: Is there a way of bringing intimacy into the process of devising an autobiographical performance? How will such a process influence/determine/increase the intimacy of the performance?

In order to explain how the research and the performance were devised I shall introduce the set of rules and principles which are the foundation of my way of working. I call these the base-dramaturgy since although they are not directly involved in writing and constructing the piece. They are already there determining the creative process and therefore the contours of the performance. This base-dramaturgy consists of a question, an initial premise and the expectation of a creative response.

What am I doing here?[10]**,** the title of a collection of travel writings by the anthropologist Bruce Chatwin, is also the question I put to myself whenever I start a project. This might seem rather odd since, being an autobiographical performer, would it not be more appropriate to begin by asking, who am I? The point is that what interests me most is not the 'I' but the relation between the 'I' with the 'here'. Posing this question reminds me of two fundamental aspects: first that, although the performance will rely on my auto/biography that is only one aspect of the performance and something I will use to connect with others; both the performers and the audience. Second, it makes me immediately engage with the 'here' and 'now', with the present moment and consequently with the others around me. 'What am I

[10] The Chatwin question and its potentials was introduced to me by the Portuguese performer and theatre director Joana Craveiro.

doing here?' makes me value the encounters which happen during the creative process whether they happen with the artists working with me, the people I encounter who will become a part of the stories I tell on stage or finally the encounter with the audience. Valuing each encounter also rejects the concentration on the object/performance in favour of a consideration of the relationship between the people involved in the performance and the different interactions which will happen between them.

As a consequence of asking 'what am I doing here?' I 'warm up' a quality in my presence as a performer, a quality which enables me to engage with the moment. At the same time I start to be very alert, very attentive and very focused on listening to the moment. As was seen above, Barthes' essay on listening introduces different types of listening. We could say that this listening to the moment relates to all of them: the 'alert' listening where I focus on the dangers and incidents that might occur during a moment (or a performance), being prepared to expect the unexpected and consequently to respond to it; the listening that 'deciphers' where I listen to the signs of the moment and try to understand what those signs are telling me and thereby choose whether to respond to those signs; and then there is the case where 'listening speaks', where I focus on what the other is 'saying' when she/he is listening (in Barthes' sense that a listener's silence is as active as the speaker's) and also the space she/he needs in order to listen 'speakingly'.

This quality of engaging with the moment might lead us to think that what I am actually doing is constructing a 'here I am' persona which will help me to create a kind of intimacy by trying to show myself in my very ordinariness or in a daily life persona. Indeed, and as we have seen in the first

chapter, whether in our lives or in an autobiographical performance, we are already performing many roles. It is right to say that, to a certain extent, I am constructing a persona because there is no such thing as 'me being there' onstage; the performer will always brings her persona to the stage, but by focusing on the listening I am making myself more available to the other (the other performers involved in the performance and the audience) and at the same time I am giving space for what Barthes calls the intersubjective space which will allow the other performers and audience to leak out their own individuality and their own artistic languages into the performance.

Following the question, comes **the premise**: to live four months in a new city, Glasgow and to devise a show about those four months.

I normally begin by defining one or more premises as the starting points for devising a performance. I call them a collection of beginnings but they are also a guide I use throughout the process especially when I get lost, reach a dead end or simply get blocked and need to re-find the original motivation. The premise should inspire and offer many possibilities to the performer to create and generate materials. There are many reasons which made me choose this premise. The most relevant to this research is that besides being autobiographical it is related to my recent past, putting me in the position of telling about an experience while at the same time still living that same experience: while I was telling those stories about my first months in Glasgow, I was still living those stories. This gave an illusion or hint of authenticity to the work although the stories could be interpreted as personal constructions the audience actually knew I had just moved to Glasgow,

whether because they knew me, someone had told them, they read it in the programme or understood it by my accent (in the case of the Glasgow performances).

The premise also had the particularity of being something other people could relate to, since almost everyone has experienced arriving in a new city (even if that city was not Glasgow) or in a new place that was strange to them. One could speculatively say that as a consequence, the performance became something both performer and audience shared, because although the stories told on stage were my personal experiences they could become the means through which the audience could invoke their personal experiences too. The performance became a place where both the performer and the audience could invoke and share their autobiographies in a two-way exchange; in this case the autobiographical premise became the key to open the door where both performer and audience could meet. In addition it occurred to me that the audience could evoke their experiences through my stories, bringing a greater sense of belongingness to the performance, suggesting a feeling that we and our lives are to a certain extent related and connected to each other. This awareness had a major impact on my understanding of intimacy because it suggested that performers and audiences could be sharing similar experiences, that they could feel closer and more intimate with each other.

Moreover, the stories I was telling involved people who were actually on stage such as the musician who played in the performance, Neil Davidson. Neil's presence kept reminding me and the audience that the stories I was telling were directly related to someone else which made the notion of

responsibility I outlined in the first chapter more bold and present; not only because I was telling stories about other people but also because one of those people was actually on stage (and sometimes in the audience since some of those people came to see the performance).

1. Neil Davidson

Neil's presence kept provoking and challenging notions of authenticity in auto/biography since his presence could be understood as a proof those stories were true even if we know that autobiography cannot tell 'the truth'; while at the same time it acted as a reminder of the performer's responsibility towards others (performers, audience, people invoked in the auto/biographical stories). An excerpt from *Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets*:

> Neil also tells you a story about his great grandmother. During the war she worked in this hotel in Denmark, taking care of some children, a sort of nanny you guess. Neil tells you that Rachmaninov spent some time practicing in that precise hotel, in the same period his great grandmother was there. Neil found out which pieces Rachmaninov

> practiced in that period in that hotel in Denmark. And today he uses those pieces in performances. Although those pieces are for piano (Gil, 2007)

The creative response: In *Small acts of Repair,* the theatre company based in Chicago, Goat Island, says:

> Think of a creative response as your own work that would not have existed without the work you are responding to. Start with the most obvious miraculous (exceptional, inspiring, unusual, transcendent, or otherwise engaging) moment that you see in the work. What appears obvious to you may not appear obvious to anyone else. (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007, p.211)

The notion of a creative response was appropriated from Goat Island and although I did not use this exact expression until I did a workshop with them[11], the idea of responding to what has inspired us in another's work was something I had already incorporated in my base-dramaturgy. The creative response is implicitly about creating value, valuing not only the work of another but also our own work because one can always take something from the work of another artist, and at the same time one has always something unique to contribute. It is a very pedagogical vision of the creative process which for me becomes very important when I work in collaboration with other artists where the focus of the creative work relies not so much on the object/performance but in the relational aspect of what connects us as artists, what are we sensitive to, what makes us engage, ultimately what is important for us when we make a performance. The creative response also starts a process of transferring because by responding to what moved me in the other's work I am appropriating part of her/his work and something has

[11] I did the Goat Island workshop in the Winter School of the 2008 edition of the National Review of Live Art in Glasgow

been transferred, something I will transform and transfer to someone else. This converts the ownership of a performance into something which is extended to all who participate in it.

In this project the notion of creative response became important because I was specifically working with artists who I had invited as 'special-guests'. I decided that I was not going to direct or even tell them what to do. Instead I invited them to respond to me and my performance by performing their own acts inside the performance. (As an example of a creative response moment, please refer to DVD n.1)

This act of inviting the other artist/performer to respond also relates to the notion of hospitality, of welcoming the other. The purpose of hospitality is to help the other to feel well received so she/he can no longer be a stranger. By feeling well received the performer might be more open, both to create and to respond to what is being asked. It is important to note that through hospitality I am not trying to seduce the other to do what I want her/him to do. It is not about manipulating the other or reducing the other to engage with whatever I want the performance to be. It is not about transforming the other into an equivalent of myself either, to reduce her/him into a version of my artistic language. Both hospitality and the creative response focus on understanding each other's differences and valuing those same differences, respecting the other performer, her/his own intimacy, creating space for her/him to respond artistically while at the same time starting a creative dialogue from which a performance will emerge. In *The Way of Love*, Luce Irigaray says:

> To approach the other, for two different subjects, does not mean to live in the neighbourhood of one other. Then they are barely inhabited

> by the same things, without necessarily living them in an identical manner. To approach implies rather becoming aware of the diversity of our worlds and creating paths which, with respect for this diversity, allow holding dialogues. Being placed side by side does not suffice for reaching nearness. (Irigaray, 2002, p.68)

Before I began to generate material for the performance I considered my first research question: whether there was an intimate process for devising work. I did not know what I meant by that exactly. I was interested in understanding to what extent the creative process and especially my base-dramaturgy were already inferring and determining the intimacy in/and the performance. Thinking about intimacy at this stage might seem contradictory since in the creative process there is no audience but that does not mean that other intimacies are not happening already or that the choices I am making are not already determining what the performance will become. In sum the creative process and the base-methodology focused on:

- valuing each encounter;
- listening to the moment which will enable the performer to be more open to the other performers and audience;
- the relational aspect of the creative process;
- the autobiographical (premise) as a key to connect with performers and audience, which will help the audience (and other performers) to invoke and share their autobiographies creating a two-way exchange between performers-audience;
- playing with authenticity, which might help people listen and be more attentive;
- keeping present the fact that staging autobiography involves telling other people's lives;

- Welcoming the other (performers and audience) by allowing space for that other 'otherness' to emerge.

From this list we can deduce that right from the beginning there is already an attention given to the other, whether this other is the people who are part of the auto/biographical stories, or the other artists who are working in the performance. The above list also indicates that intimacy, rather then being something related to physical proximity, is relational, happening between people who are involved in the performance; and these relations involve an understanding of how one conducts and behaves towards the others: how one acknowledges their differences and similarities.

As Irigaray wrote, being intimately close with another is not just achieved by being near to that person but it is an endeavour one takes in order to approach a region that is unfamiliar to us: an approach which raises issues around how one behaves and is as a performer but also as an individual.

The Performance of Writing a Letter

> Research questions: what kind of particular writing devices can bring a closer relation between the audience and the performer? What are the implications in replacing the pronoun 'I' by the pronoun 'you' in an autobiographical text?

I organised the creative process so that I could work alone in the initial stage when my job was to collect materials to be shared later on with the other artists. Although the materials could be everything from objects to photos, short films, tape-recorded interviews, clothes and so on, the fact that I had to execute a list of daily tasks which at the end of the day I would have to write about, made me engage more with writing as a way of registering those tasks. Writing, besides being very economical, is also very practical and simple when one is walking and discovering a new city. After two months I decided to write a letter and send it to Tânia Guerreiro, a friend and one of the artists who was going to join the process at a later stage. This letter inaugurated the creative responses and the transferring process but it also ended up being the text of the performance. However, at this stage I did not know that yet. In short, the letter was a collection of fragments about some of the moments I had experienced in the city of Glasgow as well as a compilation of short biographies of some of the people I had been meeting in the city. This letter was one of the key-moments of this research because it determined on the one hand the tone of the performance and on the other it challenged my assumption that intimacy might only happen when two people are near to each other.

The letter determined the tone of the performance because the text was written in a letter format giving a quality of interior/intimate dialogue

where the performer talked to herself about herself; I also used the pronoun 'you' instead of the pronoun 'I'. This placed the performer at the same time in the position of sender and the addressee of the letter (and latterly as both sender and addressee in the performance). As we have seen, autobiographical performances enable the performer to see herself as 'other' which resonates with the Lacanian mirror stage model where the 'other' can never be grasped by the subject-performer. However, by using the pronoun 'you' in the text I am also including the 'you-reader' (and later the 'you-audience'), re-stating the point that the 'you' is a multiple identity which includes different points of view (identities) besides the subject-individual-performer perspective.

In the performance my use of the pronoun 'you', besides being multiple, visibly reminded performers and audience - always present and in bold – that this idea that we are multiple identities (multiply autobiographical) is not just about empathizing with others. It is about how these multiple identities can be shared and exist together in the same space. In *Sharing the World* Luce Irigaray writes:

> Accepting that I am not the whole also signifies the possibility of glimpsing a wider world, a greater completeness – that is, the possibility of overcoming a solitary destiny in order to be involved in a being-with-the-other that does not amount to a sharing of the same in the Same. (Irigaray, p.1)

By proposing an intimate relation between two people the letter came to question the assumption that intimacy and autobiography only happen when the performer and audience are near each other. I am aware of the fact that a letter is not, strictly speaking, a performance but in this case it has helped to raise the question of what I mean when I use the word 'close' or 'closeness' to describe the relationship between performer and audience and

the relationship between intimacy and autobiographical performances. Do we need to be physically closer in order to be intimate?

On the other hand, we can indeed think of the letter as a performance given the fact that it was directed, because I wrote and edited it and because I performed it in the act of writing. It was rehearsed in that it had many drafts. It had a beginning (opening of the letter) and an ending (finishing reading it). It had a process: the writing, putting it in an envelope, stamping it, going to the post office and so on. It had an audience: the reader, and one can even see the performer's body inscribed in the handwriting.

By writing the letter to Guerreiro I ended up spending a lot of time with the person I was writing to although we were not in the same room or in the same city or even in the same country. We were distant but our presence became mediated by the text and because I invested and put so much time and energy into writing the letter I felt extraordinarily close and connected with Guerreiro who in turn as a reader filled the gaps where I was absent by imagining and picturing what I wrote and what I did not write in the letter. In this sense both performer-writer and reader-audience although not near each other, were able to connect, and there is a relational two-way exchange happening here. This challenged the idea that intimacy is something which is not possible if one is not near since, as the letter showed, we can communicate, engage and be intimate through all kinds of filters, frames, modes and barriers. Intimacy does not happen only when one is close. Closeness is about the ability to communicate and be in relation with the other and with ourselves too even if that does not happen side by side.

The One-to-One Performances

> Research question: what kind of intimate relation is being proposed in a one-to-one performance?

After the letter I decided to make a series of individual performances with the artists who were going to work with me in this project in order to share and test some of the materials I had been gathering. The one-to-one performances were presented both in Glasgow, in the performance studio of the Theatre, Film and Television Studies department in the University of Glasgow, and in Lisbon, in an empty apartment.

In brief, in all of the one-to-one performances, whether in Glasgow or in Lisbon, the spectator was blindfolded and listened to my personal stories in a structure identical to the one in the letter. I also asked for direct participation from the spectator in two particular moments: in one I asked her/him to hug me and in another I invited the spectator to dance with me.

Why a one-to-one? Why ask the audience to participate directly in the performance? What does the direct participation imply? As a performer I had done one-to-one performances before. A great potential they offer is in enabling the performer to make a personal connection with the spectator because the performer can focus all her energy in just one relation, being at the same time more available to the spectator who feels themselves to be in a special position of witnessing something which is being performed just for her/him and which is to a certain extent unique and unrepeatable. Goat Island say:

> We like to talk about audiences as witnesses. A witness watches and makes judgements and is an active participant in the outcome of the event. The event is changed because of the presence of the witness.

> The performance remains unfinished until it is witness by an audience, and then it's finished again the next night, and the next night, and the next. (Bottoms and Goulish, 2007, p.51)

Moreover, if the performance involves explicit physical interaction between the performer and the spectator then that could be said to reinforce an idea that they are some sort of accomplice to one another because they both have been involved in an explicit action where they were the only ones who experienced it and therefore the only ones who witnessed it.

2. One-to-one performance space in Glasgow: seats for the performer and the audience

Because they are very close not only in physical terms but also in the attention they can give one another everything which happens in a one-to-one performance becomes bigger and more significant. There is a relational proximity which theoretically enables both spectator and performer to be more available to one another and more vulnerable to one another because the boundaries between performer and audience have become blurred which invites risks and surprises at least in respect of the kinds of reactions, in the moment of performance, that one can expect from the spectators. Thus, even if the spectator does not explicitly participate in the actions of the performance both parties are always exchanging signs, whether they are verbal, non-verbal, explicit or implicit and, therefore a performance will always imply risks. However, the point here is that by having the spectator explicitly participating, the risk becomes a part of the performance, something that is expected and which the performer can play with. Nevertheless, having the spectator participate does not mean that she/he is engaging with the actions or is feeling rather touched by doing so. To judge from how I have seen audience members reacting (their body language, whether they make eye contact, whether they seem comfortable) as I am performing I can imagine that some spectators feel attacked and agitated, preferring the role of viewer where they are still witnesses but, because they are less exposed, might feel more protected.

In the one-to-one performances whether in Glasgow or in Lisbon I already knew all the spectators personally. This had the effect of accelerating the performance, moving it very swiftly on from a first act of intimacy (hospitality), to a second act of intimacy, the autobiographical nature of what

I was saying. This opened space for the spectator to empathize with and let their own experiences emerge creating a third intimacy where the focus is on the two-way exchange between the performer and the audience. It is curious to note that whenever I ended the one-to-one performance the spectator would always stay talking with me in order to share her/his own experiences and/or ask more questions about the stories I just had told. And they would not stay for just five minutes. In many cases the dialogue lasted for hours. This feedback became not only an opportunity for the spectator to express herself/himself verbally but it was also one way the performer could receive something back from the spectator too.

One of my purposes in blindfolding the spectator was for her/him not to be engaged only with my presence so that she/he could feel free to construct, imagine and evoke herself/himself into what she/he was listening to. This is what we called in the first chapter the intersubjective space where the spectator not only brings her/his experiences to the performance but she/he can construct and re-invent them as well.

Another characteristic of the one-to-one was the explicit participation of the spectator in two different moments; when I asked if I could give them a hug and when I invited them to dance. These moments marked the idea that the performance is something that both sides help to construct and therefore are equally responsible for. At the same time it was a moment to physically mark the intimacy that has been happening at an emotional level. Those acts became like a small ritual inside the performance, a ritual that, according to Bataille, can restore the intimate order that humanity has lost. In *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre* Jill Dolan asks:

> Can seeing performance teach us how to be physically intimate with strangers, in a culture that works harder to keep the space between us growing? (Dolan, 2008, p.27)

The one-to-one performance was presented in two different spaces which have brought new insights to my research. In Glasgow, the one-to-one was presented in the performance studio and in Lisbon in an empty apartment. This might lead us to assume that intimacy happened more strongly in the apartment since it is a personal space. However, in Glasgow, the performance studio, besides being a small space that all the spectators already knew, had a sort of domestic air about it since it was familiar to them. Even when the spectator was asked to be blindfolded (in darkness) she/he knew where they were. The empty apartment in Lisbon proposed a helpful contradiction because an apartment is supposed to be someone's home and therefore familiar and/or welcoming, but because it was empty and no one knew it, it provoked an immediate strangeness. In *Place* Simon Schama states:

> Often the home is an imagined place or a fictitiously remembered place that exists almost entirely in memory. (Dean T. and Millar J., 2005, p. 191)

Even though the sense of home is subjected to memory, and also subjected to social and cultural construction, that does not undermine the fact that when we enter someone's apartment we expect to be in a familiar environment. That is why in this case the issue of hospitality became more relevant: at the beginning of the one-to-one performance I veiled the spectator in the empty living room and made her/him walk through a long corridor into a room where she/he had never been before. This brought about

a major effect in the performance where the spectator started with no references besides the voice of the performer. This made her/him focus even more on listening to the performer. What the performer was actually saying was how strange one feels when one arrives in a new and unknown place. In this sense the performer leads the spectator to be in the same position as the performer was in the story she was telling. In the end the performer would take the spectator to an open window where she unveiled her/him who was now no longer a stranger since she/he could now see where she/he was.

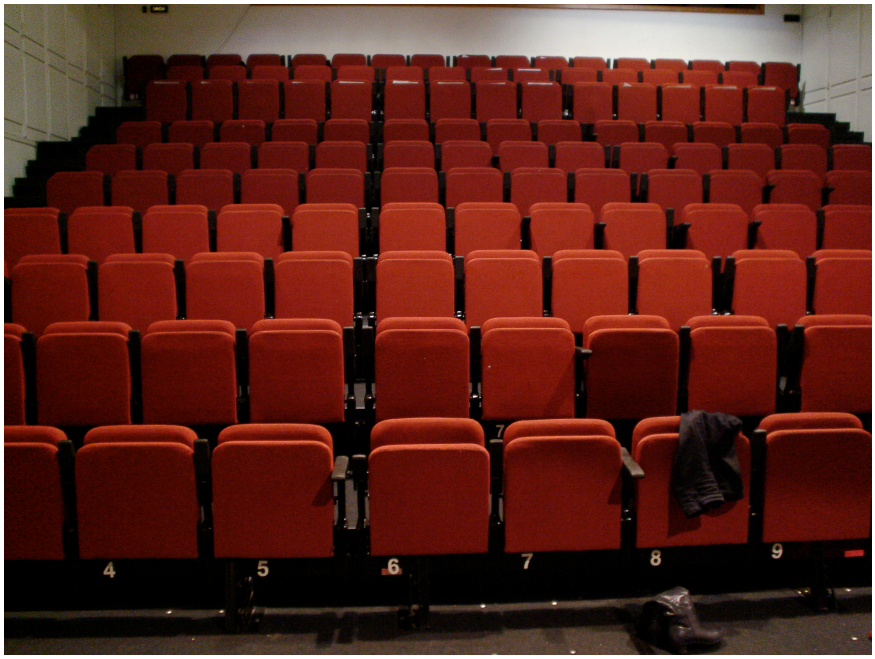
An excerpt of *Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets*:

> The first thing you feel like doing when you arrive in this city is to run away. Get on a plane a bus a taxi, just go, leave. Then you start looking for signs, so you look in all sorts of places: gardens, hidden benches, riverside walks, underground stations, buses, phone booths, small cafes. You look for specific clues, traces, special details, hidden messages. You notice there is always someone in the middle of a bridge waiting… And you too, you go to the middle of the bridge and you wait you wait you wait but nobody comes, and then, you see a huge grey cloud coming towards you. So you run you run you run through the city you run home, but there is no home besides your trolley, your laptop, your bag with your purse with your money, that's home. And you are engulfed by this huge grey cloud and you forget all the fragile reasons that brought you here. Why have you come?

The Gulbenkian Performance

> Research question: Is it possible to have an intimate performance in a venue with two hundred people?

When we started to work in Gulbenkian and I am saying, we, since many other artist and performers were involved in the making of the performance, we were confronted with two situations: we would have to perform in a venue for two hundred people and we would only have access to the venue two days before the opening night. Since we had been constructing an intimate performance based on the relational connection with the audience we asked ourselves how was it possible to achieve this with an audience of two hundred people, how was it possible to have a relational intimacy with two hundred people?



3. The two hundred seat auditorium

At the first meeting in the Gulbenkian Foundation all the artists in the project gathered in order to share their creative responses and to experiment. Everyone was on stage: Susana Guardado, the visual artist and also a DJ was playing records while Neil Davidson, the musician, was improvising. Pedro Silva, the set designer was making an installation while Tânia Guerreiro was listening to me saying the text and Catarina Varatojo, the costume designer, was taking pictures. Considering the eventual performance of *Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets*, this was definitely a very distant scene from what the performance became.

After this meeting we chose to keep the fragments and ideas that inspired us the most and also seemed to fit the theoretical and/or staging ideas I was working with. We kept the idea of having me on stage telling my stories at the same time as Neil improvised. We retained the idea of having special-guests in the performance, but only briefly. We kept the record player and some of the records, but not the DJ. We kept a chair, which was a piece Guardado had made for an exhibition, and we kept the two lamps, but discarded a video projector. Basically, we tried to keep the focus on the performers. In the second stage of our preparation for the 200 seats performance instead of having daily rehearsals, and by this I mean developing the performance in order to achieve a final piece which is then repeatable, we decided that we would present daily performances where we would have always one or more guests as an audience. After each daily performance we had a feedback session with the audience which continued the idea of a two-way exchange between performers and audience. At the same time the responses from the audiences kept challenging us. It is also important to note

that some of the decisions about the evolving performance were made not because we specifically wanted to perform everyday but they were a compromise between our artistic intentions and the conditions the Gulbenkian had to offer us since, for example, the schedule of venues we had to work in changed on a daily basis. All of this contributed to keeping our performance in a constant process of metamorphosis which gradually began to give an identity and a structure to the piece. We slowly started to find the performance's beginnings and endings, discovering that although there were open moments where we could improvise there were aspects of the performance that were stable, such as the stories I was telling and the structures in which Neil could play. When we finally moved to the venue where we were going to perform for the two hundred people we had already found the structure of the performance and the question we now faced was, as Neil Davidson said at the time; how much do we need to keep stable to keep the identity of the piece and in turn how much of the piece's identity can we risk?

This made us take decisions: I would only hug one person in the audience since hugging everyone would take a long time and would not necessarily improve the personal relationship with each spectator. On the contrary it could be extremely confusing and distract the audience. The guests (the performer who was going to play Marilyn Monroe and the tango dancers) would be in the audience watching the performance and would only come on stage to perform their act in order to make clear that the stories were the centre of the performance and also to explicitly perform or show the idea of hospitality as they come into the performance space to do their acts.

The set design, including lights and props, were kept to a minimum so the focus was on the performers rather than on spectacular lighting effects or complicated set designs. The use of the pronoun 'you' was used as a tool to engage with each one of the spectators since it would be impossible to make eye-contact with everyone in the audience but by using the pronoun 'you' I felt I was invoking the audience individually. We decided that we would start the show in black-out so we could draw in the attention of audience, making it clear that what was important was the listening dimension to the performance. At this point we again asked; was the piece intimate?

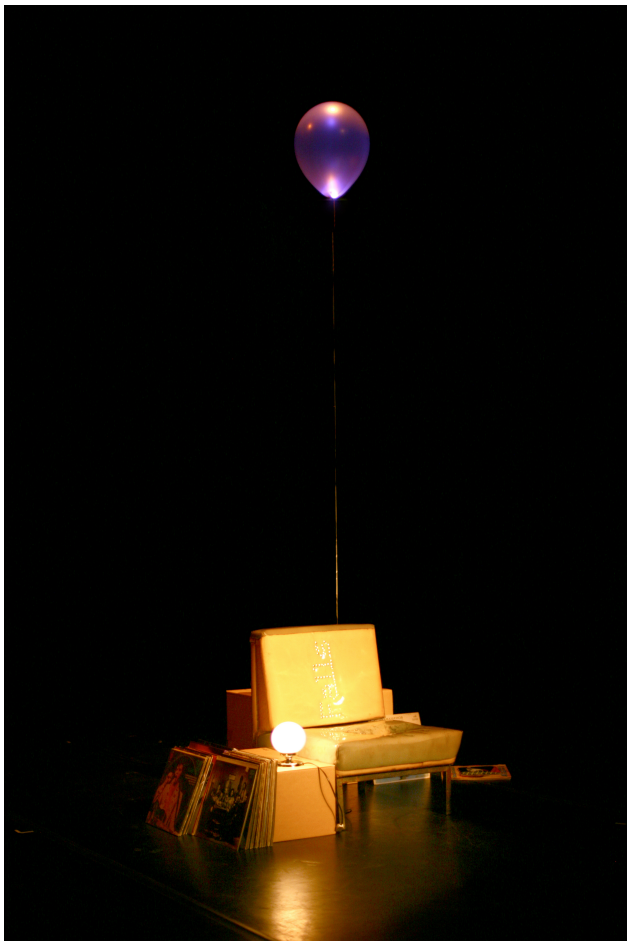
About the Gulbenkian performance we could say that the base-dramaturgy, the process and the choices we made along with the conditions we were offered made the performance consistently alive but not in a spectacular way. Rejecting a lighting design which involved many changes, tones and effects in favour of something darker had a major, important effect on the intimacy we were trying to achieve. By using low lights and speaking with a low voice the audience had to make an effort to see and listen, the audience had to 'reach' forward, to attend more closely to the performers and thus implicate themselves in the performance.

In the beginning of the performance, when Neil and I were in darkness, there were also no introductions or explications as to what we are doing or why it was dark. (Please refer to the DVD track n.2)

The audience has to start to make connections between the sounds Neil is playing in relation to what I am saying. Consequently, the audience begins to relate to what is happening on stage, they have to start to make choices,

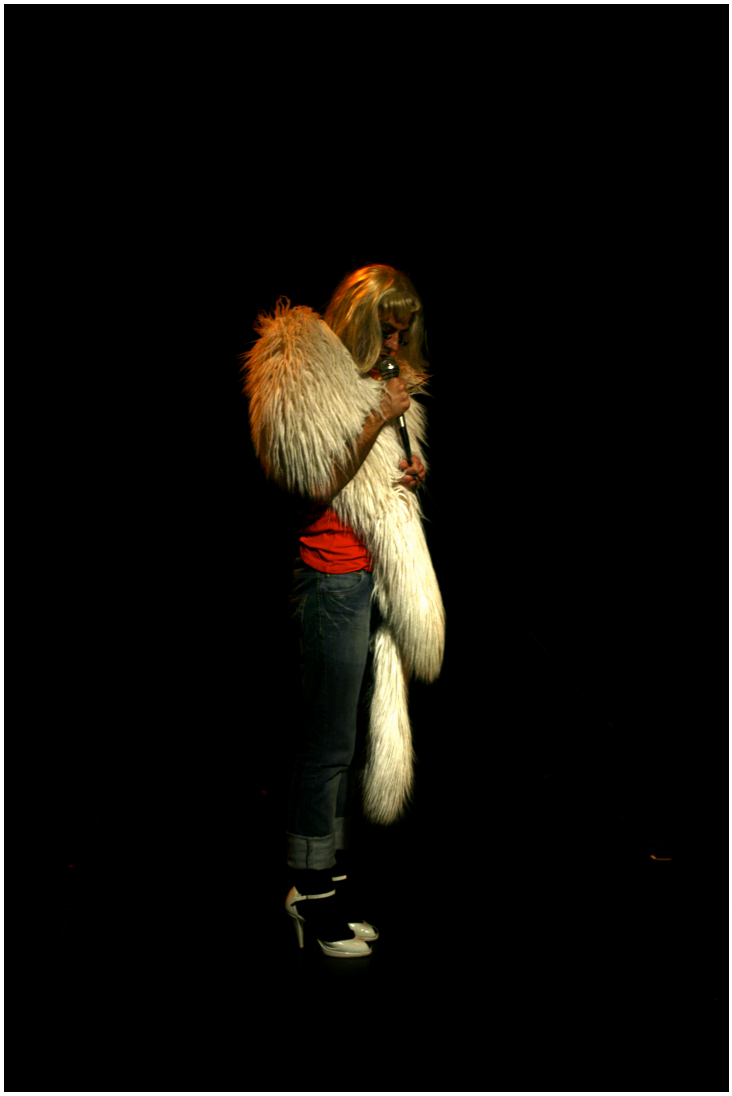
to relate the sounds and text. Following this, Neil and I start to recite lists simultaneously in English and Portuguese which the audience will have to decipher, to work out what the relationships are between what we are each saying. (Please refer to DVD n.3)

But because we are speaking in low voices the audience cannot hear everything so there is a selective process again. The audience starts to be responsible for the reception of the performance because they have to choose what to listen to. And this resonates with the idea of hospitality since we welcome the audience by allowing them to choose we are allowing them to make connections, giving the audience the possibility and the responsibility of creating intimacy.



4. **The Gulbenkian set**

Later in the performance, when I am telling my stories, sharing those auto/biographies, I realised that the way I speak, the rhythm and my presence and especially my not literally saying or explaining everything, that too encourages the audience to keep making connections between the different stories I tell. There is also an investment from the performers in not filling the performance with text or sounds, allowing silences that the audience can fill with their own stories and having time to relate what is being said on stage to their own stories. The performers: Neil Davidson and whoever is doing Marilyn or the dancers, the way they construct and manage to imprint their own presence in the show is never literal or explicit and is never explained or justified by me either. This brings a strangeness to their presence but also a curiosity in understanding why they are there and who they are.



5. Miguel Bonneville as Marilyn Monroe

All the decisions we made during the process of making the performance in the Gulbenkian were about taking care of and understanding these intimate relations, understanding and developing our relation with the performance. With regard to our intimacy with the audience we could say that it was something that had to be already there and understood among the performers in order for us to be able to offer it to the audience.

The Gilmorehill Performance

> Research question: How is performing to an audience of fifty people different from performing to an audience of two hundred people?

The next moment of this research was when we presented the performance at the G12 Gilmorehill Theatre in Glasgow and this time we chose a limited number of fifty seats for our performance. This number was a deliberate compromise between the performance for two hundred people in Gulbenkian and the one-to-one performances done earlier. In the Gilmorehill performance the physical relation and the set design remained basically the same as in the Gulbenkian performance. Besides Neil Davidson, the special guests were different, although what they had to do was the same.

With this new audience-performer relation the challenge was to understand what could change by having a small number of people but not as small as performing for one. How can the intimacy and the engagement with the stories be different? I also was interested in knowing if it would be possible to make a personal connection with each one of the fifty spectators.

Defining the number of audience members might seem somewhat arbitrary but if we, as performers, want to have a personal relation with each one of the spectators, if I want to at least make a personal connection as simple as to make eye contact with each one of the spectator then there must be a limit. There is also a qualitative difference between doing it for fifty people or doing it for two hundred people. This is related to the time the performer has to spend with each one of the spectators, considerably less than when there are one hundred and fifty more people. Besides being able to make a personal connection with each one of the spectators, making eye

contact at least once with each, there was also the fact that this time in G12 I could see the audience, which was slightly illuminated. This also made me more aware that it can be very stressful and draining trying to reach even fifty people. Nevertheless, making a personal connection with each spectator reinforces the idea that they are important, special, that there is a connection between me and each one of them and by marking that connection they might feel well received and comfortable. In addition by only having fifty people listening to my personal stories there was a sense that they all belonged to a temporary community because they all shared my stories.

However, though the G12 performance made possible a personal connection with the spectators it also challenged the idea that by doing so we are really engaging with the audience since it can also work in the opposite direction making the audience feel more exposed than when they are protected by the anonymity of the dark. But this exposure also works from both sides, since the performer can also feel more out in the open even if her intention is to make a connection and became closer with the spectator. In addition, the fact that the audience was more visible and physically closer in the Gilmorehill performance made me aware of another issue. By asking someone to hug me I was not only touching the spectator but we were also being watched by the rest of the audience who were made witnesses of this small act. The audience became voyeurs to this act since they might take pleasure in watching the hug at the same time as the performer and the spectator might find pleasure in being watched while hugging and being hugged.

6. Maria Gil hugging a member of the audience

In the Gilmorehill performance, the hug between the performer and the audience was also a small ritual to mark the intimacy that had happened during the performance on an emotional level but, in this case, because the audience was slightly illuminated, I could see the other spectators watching this small ritual. It was then that I realized that intimacy happens not only between performers and audience but also between spectators who are sitting side by side and therefore engage through the performance and the performers in a personal and intimate relation. Jill Dolan writes:

> Audiences often form a community around a common present experience of love for a charismatic, virtuosic performer, not necessarily around their desire to be close to him or her, but through the performer, to be pulled into comfortable, more intimate proximity to each other. Intersubjectivity extends beyond the binary of performer-spectator (or even performers-audience) into an effective possibility among members of the audience. (Dolan, 2008 p.31)

The G12 performance allowed for a deepening of the two-way relationship between the audience and the performer, both building on the work done in Gulbenkian in terms of familiarity with the performance and because there were only fifty people present. But it is also true that holding and sustaining a personal relation with fifty people in an audience is exhausting. The performer suffers stress through trying to achieve the relation by contact, eye contact and so on rather than achieving intimacy through the careful communication of the text.

Performing outdoors in Tavira

> Research question: is it possible to achieve intimacy when performing outdoors?

We were invited to participate in a performance festival *Formas*, which took place in a small touristy town in the south of Portugal and where we had to perform in a small square outside an art gallery. The performance was free and the number of spectators was not limited. The people could come and go, could leave the performance in the middle or just come to watch the end. We saw in this opportunity a challenge to our performance and to this research since we often tend to think of street theatre as something more visual, more musical and spectacular (indeed many of the other performances in the festival were like this). Based on these assumptions, we were risking our performance since there would be the noises of cars, the wind, people talking, children eating, and so on which would keep drawing the audience's attention, and ours, away from our performance.

Many people were expected to attend our performance and because of the strong wind we had an option to use microphones. Both Neil Davidson and I decided to use these although we resisted to begin with because it would make the performance self-evident and ruin the subtleties we had constructed in the performance. In the end it became helpful so that the people could listen to the performance. Again we asked ourselves how to keep stable the identity of the piece and in turn how much of the piece's identity we could risk. In this case it became important for the audience to listen to the performers since it would be impossible to play with other elements such

as the black out or talking in the dark and even in drawing attention to the small gestures and noises.

7. The Tavira stage

8. The Tavira audience seating (Maria Gil eating dinner)

Ultimately the performance in Tavira seemed unsuccessful and a rather frustrating experience, especially in terms of our interest in creating intimacy or in attempts to make personal contact with the audience. I also had the impression as a performer that instead of sharing my stories I was exposing myself and receiving nothing in return from the audience. About the autobiographical performances Adrian Howells did with the dancer Nigel Charnock, Howells says:

> All of the work I did with Nigel was about washing my dirty laundry in public, very confessional and raw, but I had no control over how it was presented. I didn't get very much back from the audience. There was nobody waiting at the stage door to take me home after the show. It was exhausting and quite frustrating. (Smith, 2008, p.28)

We could see the Tavira performance as merely a bad performance, at least from the performers' point of view, but when we experience a bad performance this can be the case for both audience and/or performers. Although the Tavira performance was a bad experience for me it was a significant moment that led to more understanding of the relationship between intimacy and autobiographical performance. Autobiographical performances which search for intimacy specifically need the two-way exchange. The performer also needs, as Howells said, to have something back from the audience.

The Studio Performance

This time we had to present the performance in the context of my MPhil practical assessment. This gave us the freedom to choose how we wanted to perform and what kind of relation we wanted to have with the audience. We decided to present a 'home version', the one we believed could render visible the methodology and issues we have been using and exploring, but also allow the performer not only to make a personal connection with the audience but to have more time to develop that relation during the performance. The expression 'home version' for me meant that although the structure and the content of the performance remained the same we decided not to work with technicians or to have extra people working for the performance besides the performers. We also decided to reduce the light and the lighting effects to a minimum in order to keep the focus on the performers. To be able to make a personal connection and to have more time to be with each one of the spectators we decided again to limit the number of spectators to ten. This number was decided by the number of chairs we could have in the first row, but also so that from where I was sitting my field of vision could see all of the audience. We also decided to have a feedback session after the performance so the audience could share their impressions with us.

In the beginning of the performance the lack of light might have created a situation on the part of the audience where they tried to connect visually and they could not since the stage was very dark. Again, the audience was given the option to make connections and pick up relations from what

they were listening to and gradually choose what to connect with in visual terms. The lighting design followed the dramaturgy of the performance, starting with an idea of arriving in a strange city and then gradually becoming more familiar as the light became warmer too, following also the idea of passing from a condition of being a stranger to becoming a host.

9. The studio performance space

With just ten spectators present this allowed me to have a specific moment with each one of them choosing particular moments to give to particular spectators. I also had more time to give to each one of the spectators and throughout the performance I could come back to a spectator and continue the personal relation I had started.

We had the opportunity to perform twice and on the first day, because the tango dancers could not be present, I invited a member of the audience to dance with me which again raised the question of the spectator accepting just

because he was being exposed. Having someone from the audience taking part in the performance was a very intimate act for him and the audience who became both voyeurs and witnesses of that event.

It is important to note that the feedback session after the performance was an important moment because the audience could explicitly express by words their impressions and this seemed important as a form of concluding and acknowledging the intimacy that the autobiographical performance had initiated.

The Solo Performance

This year I was invited to perform in a festival in Santiago de Compostela in Spain. After the experience of performing in Tavira, and having decided to do a solo performance of *Glasgow 4* I made clear to the curators of the festival that this was an intimate performance, that I was sharing my personal stories and needed to create an intimate relation with the audience. They replied saying they had a small garden where they thought the performance could happen and that although they had a loyal and regular audience attending their festival, the audience was small, never more than thirty or forty people. On arriving in Santiago de Compostela I found that the garden where I was going to perform was not very small after all but I found a small corner under a tree for the performance that was satisfactory. As I was performing in a language other than Spanish (Portuguese) I decided to use a microphone since I did not want the spectator to make a double effort in trying to listen and translate what I was saying. I have to say that everyone from the festival organization was very welcoming not only because they received me well but, also because they understood and showed a great respect for the artists work which made all the on site decisions easy. In conclusion the performance in Spain went well. The audience was not more than twenty people, making possible a personal connection between performer and spectator.

10. Maria Gil and the audience in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Because there were no seats available for the spectators they had to sit on the grass and that gave an informal air to the performance, perhaps helping the audience to feel more relaxed and more available to listen to the personal stories.

As I said above, our performance in Tavira went badly and I think this is because we did not get anything back from the audience, did not get anything in return for being exposed. On reflection what was missing in Tavira was hospitality, not the hospitality of the performers in inviting in an audience to share the performance but the hospitality of welcoming the performance. In this sense the festival performance in Spain was very good because they very specifically went out of their way to be hospitable and welcoming, in turn giving me space to create space for the performance and the intimacy to happen. In *Sharing the World* Luce Irigaray writes:

Welcoming will first take place outside us, even if this outside has a corresponding place within us and belongs to the most intimate part of ourselves. (Irigaray, 2008, p.19)

Conclusion

Reflecting on my research process and the laboratory exercises I completed, I have found that it is very difficult to say, categorically, whether a performance was intimate or not. Intimate to whom? To the performers, to the spectators, to both? Who decides it? Intimacy is not a 'thing' the performer controls and uses when she wants, on the contrary, during this process I found out that intimacy is fundamentally relational, and is concerned with the ability the performer has in communicating and being in relation with the audience and, in the end, with herself. Nevertheless, this ability to 'communicate with others' does not guarantee, per se, an intimate performance since the audience also has to engage and to communicate (to be in a relation) with the performers and the performance.

Throughout my research, I have also discovered that intimacy is not something which exclusively happens between the autobiographical performer and the audience: it happens between spectators, performers and among the other performers with the audience, since they also are 'in relation' with each other. Thus, I am aware that the implications of these intimacies to the performance could have been explored more fully and I expect to develop these specific ideas in future research.

As to the relationship between autobiography and intimacy, I have found that autobiography enables both performer and audience to be closer to each other and, therefore, more intimately related: by staging her life the autobiographical performer is offering the audience members the opportunity to be 'in tune' with the performer's autobiographical stories but, at the same

time, to experience their own stories through the performer's experiences. Autobiographical performance helps us to understand that we and our lives are bound together and that our individual stories are inseparable from the collective and this brings a sense of belongingness (and closeness) to the performer-audience relationship; that our lives are part of a larger whole, that we are all, to a certain extent, related to each other.

Throughout this research I have also discovered that autobiography can also be seen as an act of hospitality, where the performer welcomes the audience with her personal stories so they feel well received and therefore, more available to share (or to project) their own personal stories with the performer. I have also discovered that the performer also needs to feel welcomed, well received and to have something back from the audience in order to be able to be engaged and be more intimate with the audience.

Hospitality might, sometimes, be compared with seduction, or the welcoming act may be confused with an attempt the performer makes in order to seduce the audience. During this research I have found hospitality and seduction are different notions: hospitality is different from seduction because it implies an acknowledgement of the other's 'otherness' (strangeness) and is about welcoming the other in all her/his similarities and differences. Seduction is about manipulating the other in order to obtain an approval of the performer's autobiography. This difference between hospitality and seduction does not imply that performers and spectators cannot be seduced by the intimacy of the performance, by the autobiographical nature of the performance, by the performers, by the music in the performance, by the light design or the set and so on, but that is very

different from a previous intention of seducing the other. Nevertheless, I am aware that these issues would take us into further investigations such as the relationship between autobiography and seduction which, although they might seem very appealing, were not the aim of this research.

Intimacy is something the performer cannot control or predict but there are options the performer can make which help intimacy to emerge. In the case of the performance *Glasgow 4, the Name of all the Streets*, those options privileged and focussed on the personae and actions of the performers; in the autobiographical stories, and in the performer's ability in communicating those stories; in a refusal of a spectacular set or/and light design; and in a focus on the 'listening aspect' of the performance. All these decisions and options helped to draw attention to the relational aspect of the performance and they have helped the performers and the audience to feel more intimate with each other.

In relation to the number of people that an 'intimate' performance must have, this research has showed that it is something very subjective, because performing for two hundred people can be 'intimate' and a one-to-one performance might not be 'intimate' at all. However, during this research there was a qualitative difference which changed when the performance had a smaller number of spectators because the performer had more time to give and to be with each spectator; the performer could make a personal connection which helped spectators to engage and connect with her. But a small audience may also make the spectator feel constrained because she/he is more exposed which might lead to a disengagement with the performance.

In relation to one-to-one performances presented during this research, they happened to be moments of great uniqueness, where the performer was more available to the spectator and vice versa; which brings a great sense of intimacy to the performance, a feeling that they are both witnesses and accomplices in each others actions. However, this research has showed that intimacy not only happens if the performer and the audience are in physical proximity to each other, they can be intimate through many frames and filters which was the case of the letter-performance. Intimacy it is not related to physical proximity but to an emotional and subjective immediacy, where both performers and audiences engage in their autobiographical experiences and personal feelings, beliefs and desires.

This research has also showed that intimacy and autobiographical performances are not isolated acts, that they involve other people besides the performer, people who participate directly (performers and audience) or indirectly (the people the performer invokes in her auto/biography). Consequently, these relations imply ethical responses on the part of the autobiographical performer. During the different performances of *Glasgow 4, the Name of all the Streets*, those ethical implications were negotiated and challenged right from the beginning of the creative process with the artistic decisions and commitments that were taken from the start: in the beginning of the collaborative process, every artist was invited to bring their own individuality to the performance. This made all the artists more involved but also more responsible for the performance and consequently more available to engage with the work; the presence of Neil Davidson on stage made visible to the audience that the stories the performer was telling belonged to other

people, people who existed (at least Neil). This became an important mark of the performance because it acknowledged the performer's responsibility towards the people she was also telling about in her auto/biography, and at the same time, it transferred any moral conclusions to the audience; Neil's presence had the effect of making the audience responsible too, at least in what they imagined and projected towards Neil, making them more involved and intimate with the performer and with the performance.

Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets, will be presented next December in a small shopping mall in the suburbs of Lisbon, this will lead to further questions such as, what is the relationship between intimacy, autobiography and public spaces. This research, therefore, will continue and the questions and issues raised and addressed with this work, will be developed further to search for a greater understanding of the relationship between intimacy and autobiographical performances.

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Appendix

Glasgow 4, the name of all the streets

Written by Maria Gil

The first thing you feel like doing when you arrive in this city is to run away. Get on a plane a bus a taxi, just go, leave. Then you start looking for signs, so you look in all sorts of places: gardens, hidden benches, riverside walks, underground stations, buses, phone booths, small cafes. You look for specific clues, traces, special details, hidden messages. You notice there is always someone in the middle of a bridge waiting… And you too, you go to the middle of the bridge and you wait you wait you wait but nobody comes, and then, you see a huge grey cloud coming towards you. So you run you run you run through the city you run home, but there is no home besides your trolley, your laptop, your bag with your purse with your money, that's home. And you are engulfed by this huge grey cloud and you forget all the fragile reasons that brought you here. Why have you come? Have you come to get rich? Have you come to forget? Have you come for secret reasons? For now, you can't see, you're in the middle of this huge grey cloud, so you listen.

The weather is strange

The food is strange

People are strange

Buses are strange

The bus drivers are strange

Bus stops are strange

Bus timetables are strange

Streets are strange

Dogs are strange

Trees are strange

The river is strange

Ducks and squirrels are strange

Urban foxes are strange

Bridges are strange

The postman is strange

The underground is strange

The money is strange

The pavement is strange

The traffic is strange

The language is strange

The coffee is strange

The bread is strange

Shops are strange

Smiling is strange

Sleeping is strange

Clothes are strange

Shoes are strange

Plugs are strange

Taps are strange

Friends are strange

Taxi drivers are strange

The south side is strange

The west end is strange

The central station is strange

And suddenly, you realize that the only stranger here is you.

You've just arrived in this city. You look at the map and this city is like any other city. There are cars, noises, people, poor people, rich people, tall people, giants, white people, black people, tourists, police, fireman cars, flowers, cats, children, junk, junkies, crazy bus drivers, doors, mysteries, dumped bodies, souls, poets, mafia, action, chaos, screams, stories to be written, life, fast moves, stops an' starts, bruises, songs, traitors, strangers, dreams, nightmares, heroes, fights, battles, love, bananas-splits, looks, choreographies, jumps, hot and cold, secret messages, expectations, dates, lights, illicit Christmas, elevators that go up and down… And you are looking at the map of this city and everything fits here. And then you ask what do you do when you arrive in a new city? What do you do to belong to this place?

They tell you to smile to everyone you meet although they also tell you it doesn't work. They tell you to find a job, any kind of job, it will give you a feeling of belonging to some sort of community which is very important, they tell you. They tell you to give something, a present; the important thing is to give. They tell you to speak to someone, but someone friendly, someone who inspires trust. They tell you to eat where the locals eat, although it may sound ridiculous, or to act like local people, try to do the same things as they do. They tell you, to take a seat, observe for a while and spend some time taking notes, trying to understand what makes people laugh. They tell you to walk and explore. They tell you the most important thing to do when you arrive in a new city is to know where the local council office is and to know the phone number for the emergency services, and then, of course, to know where the police station, the hospital, schools, libraries are, but if you really

want to belong to that city you have to know the name of all the streets. They tell you to get a boyfriend. They tell you to walk into a restaurant, observe people for while, and try to understand who you feel more attracted to. Then go straight to that person, ask something, anything. And then just go from that person to another person and eventually you will start belonging. They tell you, we are all foreigners outside our home-country. They tell you 1st to absorb all the information you can from publicity and the adverts in the streets, and 2nd to lie on the grass and take time for your body to go deeper and deeper into the earth. They tell you to connect with the trees connect with nature to belong to the moment. They tell you if you want to belong to a new city you must let it fecundate you. They tell you to dance with as many people as you can and to show yourself. They tell you to leave behind a kind of mask, or a footprint, a secret bond between you and that place. They tell you to look at your surroundings and try to understand what they look like, geographically. And then, try to find a special detail, a specific door, a small tree, a particular person... They tell you that on the first level we are always foreigners to the others but on a second level they tell you to choose the sweetest path, the one with least violence because we are all sick of violence and on this path you will always get to somewhere and on this path you will always end up belonging.

Attempts to belong to a new city

First attempt, getting a job:

For actors these are good jobs. You can choose between doing a clown gig or playing Marilyn Monroe. It seems big corporations and companies are hiring actresses to do the “Happy Birthday Mr. President” routine when it’s the president’s birthday or even the company’s birthday. You choose to play Marilyn as they always have more fun. It’s very simple. You go to the company party. You can be late because Marilyn was always late for that gig anyway. And you just have to sing into a fake diamond microphone what Marilyn sang.

Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday Mr. President

Happy birthday to you

Your second job in the city

It’s Christmas time and there is a campaign going on called: “Hug someone strange this Christmas”, and basically you just have to hug people in the streets and give them flyers about some solidarity programme. And sometimes you can show people how to hug better, (Maria hugs audience) how to stay connected with the earth, how to hold their centre, how to listen to the other person’s heart, to understand how strong the other person needs to be hugged.

Your third job in the city. Telling stories on the internet, to help people fall asleep. There is this fashion now, to “work from home” or do “e-jobs”. And basically, you just tell stories to people: children, adults, you never really know who is on the other side, using software like Skype or Messenger. At the appointed hour you stay on-line waiting for your clients. When they come on you begin by saying “Hello! Good evening”, ask them to switch off the lights, to lie down, stay comfortable and in case they fall asleep during the story you say in advance “Goodnight, sleep well”.

Second attempt to belong to a new city: to go from one person to another:

STEWART

You met Stewart in a library. To be more precise, you met Stewart in front of an elevator inside a library. You were both waiting for the elevator which was taking forever. You became impatient. He laughed. And you liked that, it was a kind of empathy. A kind of "I am with you" gesture. Anyway, he went to the tenth floor, you went to the eleventh. But you knew that on your way back you would pass by the tenth floor. And you did. He was reading something by Derrida and you asked something about the book to which he replied by doing some sort of mime and you laughed till you both went out to the corridor and he explained to you that he had been expelled from public libraries many

times before so he had to be careful. He asked where you were from. You told him to guess, He said: Israel. The following days were very nice. Like guided tours around the city; discovering a city and a person at the same time. Stewart was about to leave for India where he was going to study ancient theatre. You had just arrived so there was an organic no worries flow to your connection, which was good. Because you were both penniless you spent a lot of time in the streets which was good. If you close your eyes now, you remember when he showed you a small room with a private puppetry collection in the Mitchell Library. Stewart was a philosopher but he spent the last years teaching English in southeast Asia and in Japan. He has returned to a city where he doesn't recognize himself anymore. If you close your eyes now you can also remember when you went dancing to a strange club in the west end. Stewart was going through several internal conflicts, very deep ones; being a philosopher it would make those become even deeper. Stewart wore always the same clothes. You just started noticing this towards the end. He didn't smell but his clothes were always the same; and he was the kind of person whom whatever you would ask, he would always answer "very pleasant.". "-did you like the food? - it was very pleasant." "-Did you enjoy the movie? - It was very pleasant."

Our goodbye was quick and strange. Even so, you phoned his mother who told you that he had arrived well in Kerala. He also sent you an email saying that "the weather was, very pleasant". If you close your eyes now, you can imagine him studying ancient Indian theatre in Kerala, with a skull-mask in his hand, like a wandering nomadic Hamlet for the future times.

NEIL

You saw in this shop window, an old record of Rachmaninov with a beautiful cover from a distant icy place. You go into the shop and you start talking to the man working at the counter. While you are talking about music and the city you tell him that what you're really looking for is a guitar player, someone who can improvise and also perform and he tells you that you must meet Neil. Neil is an avant-garde musician who coincidently was going to Lisbon the following week to give a concert. He asked you to wait and a few moments later you are talking to Neil on the phone. You never understood very well where he was going to play in Lisbon. But you arranged to meet when he returned. Meanwhile, you are in one of those informal meetings, very

fashionable at the moment, about “time management” or “time planning”. One of the girls, Luciana, she is a musician and when you tell her that you are looking for a guitar player she tells you must meet Neil. Neil is an avant-garde musician. At first you don’t associate this Neil with the Neil on the phone at the record shop. But then you realize they are the same. The following week you are at a concert and Neil is playing with a girl. And it is really avant-garde. He’s playing guitar with a little stone, a small empty whisky bottle and she is making sounds with her mouth closed and she has her eyes closed too. When you finally meet, Neil brings a book by Derrida and he tells you that this book is about a woman who during her whole life wrote down all the dreams she had. Before she died she gave all her writing to a French archive, but they didn’t know what to do with it? They had never kept this kind of material before. Derrida met this woman in a library in Paris and they exchanged letters until she died. And for a moment you don’t know which story you are living anymore, nor to whom the Derrida book belongs nor in which city you are after all? Nor how everything is going to end up.

Neil also tells you a story about his great grandmother. During the war she was in this hotel in Denmark, taking care of some children, a sort of nanny I guess. Neil tells you that Rachmaninov spent some time practicing in that precise hotel, in the same period his great grandmother was there. Neil found out which pieces Rachmaninov practiced in that period in that hotel in Denmark. And today he uses those pieces in performances. Although those pieces were for piano. And then you remember the old Rachmaninov record, the one you saw in that shop window, with a beautiful cover from a distant icy place. And you wonder if that landscape on the cover is the same which

Neil's great grandmother and Rachmaninov saw from that hotel in Denmark. And you wonder if that same hotel is Hamlet's old castle. Hamlet, who is now wandering through India in search of` himself.

SONIA

You met Sonia in that job where you hugged people in streets. Sonia is from Switzerland. Sonia is a dancer. She has come to this city to take a course on Dance in Social Contexts. And you discover Sonia little by little. First you notice that she is always dressed for difficult situations: Mountain shoes, waterproof trousers, ski jacket, a little cotton scarf around her neck. Then you discover that she spent the last years working as a volunteer in Sudan, Kenya and the Gaza Strip. And finally, she tells you how she and a group of

volunteers developed a circus programme with children orphaned by war in the Gaza Strip. And how she and this group of volunteers managed to put up a huge circus tent in the middle of the Gaza Strip and managed to arrange that both sides, all sides, neither side of the conflict would attack the tent while they performed the circus inside. Sonia is a kind of Lara Croft but beautiful, Angelina Jolie, but beautiful. Like a Pina Bausch dancer because she does things with her legs but beautiful.

I-WEI

I-Wei is Canadian but everybody speaks to I-Wei as if she were Chinese but she is not Chinese she is Canadian and her family has been living in Canada for

over three generations now. And this is a big thing for I-Wei. She is a film maker, and she has come to this city to do her next project. She wants to make martial art movies but with no actors.

SCOTT

You met Scott when you were having problems with your wireless connection on your laptop and you had to call on the services of the computer department of this university. And the computer department of this university is in the main building and you found that funny. All these modern high-tec objects in a gothic style building. And as you were walking through the building you saw old computers piled up like carcasses and skulls forgotten in the corridors. You found it strange. There was something Moby Dickian about it that made sense. Scott's office is in one of those gothic rooms and it all started because he couldn't figure out what language your computer was programmed in. Spanish he asked? His tattoos also made an impression on you; like ancient quimeras gargoyles to have jumped from the building itself

on to his arms. Scott is from South Africa, no, he was born in Zimbabwe but grew up in South Africa. And you ask: “What is an African doing in Glasgow?”. And you ask him how did he manage to survive the weather, the people, the food, all these difficulties that someone coming from the south faces. You stay talking, Africa, Africa and Africa. You arrange to meet and he gives you an African cigarette for the road, a strong one: Savana. Time passes and out of the blue he sends you an email about how he spent one year milking cows in the Golan Heights and how, because of that, he started dreaming frequently about cows. You are reading that and suddenly a flash hits you. “Wait a minute! The Golan Heights! But the Golan Heights are in Israel! On the borders of Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. The Golan Heights are occupied by Israel and Syria still claims them! Scott milking cows in a desert plateau, constantly covered by ice and snow? And suddenly, for you Scott is a CIA agent disguised as a western freak or maybe he is a mercenary who has money hidden in some offshore bank account, and because of that he needs to spend some time living a discreet life with a discrete job in a discreet city like this. And it’s then that you go out for a drink… Its Friday night you are going to a Ceilidh. He wants to wear his kilt but it doesn’t fit him anymore. You laugh and dance all night, you drinking Glenfiddich, he is smoking Savana, which is when he tells you the story about how his parents met. His father was a young engineer sent to work in the Outer Hebrides, to Stornoway. Scott’s mother worked there in the local telephone exchange; those old ones, where an operator connected the calls manually. One day, there was this big party in town and Scott’s father didn’t have anyone to go to with. So, what does he do? He calls the telephone exchange and invites the operator who makes the

connections to go to the party with him, the rest is history. Today they live in South Africa, they tried to live in Australia and New Zeland but they can't leave Africa. Scott tells you about the magnificence of the Callanish Stones and how little you feel facing those rocks put there by some ancient ancestors. And you don't know anymore whether it's the Glenfiddich or the Savana cigarettes; or the gargoyles on Scott's arms or if its this city but, in this moment, you want to spent the rest of your life in Stornoway, next to the Callanish Stones, next to the Ocean, and of course, next to Scott.

AMIR

Your first friend in the city was Amir. Amir is from Iran. No, he has dual nationality. He can choose whether to show his passport from Iran or his passport from the United States of America. You envy this. You have always wanted to have dual nationality. To be Russian but at the same time French. To be Italian but at the same time from Cape Vert. To be from Chile but at the same time Kurdish. From Lebanon but at the same time from Iceland. Amir has that desert tenderness and he has come to this city to do an MBA. And he becomes like family, a person who asks the family questions. Are you ok? Have you been eating well? Is there anything you need? And you cannot avoid smiling, thinking that you needed to travel all the way to this city to meet Amir. And you cannot avoid smiling while thinking about this city and

about the people you have been meeting and how you would like that the history of the world could be written by people like them, people like Amir, Stewart, Neil, Sonia, I-Wei, Scott. People like you. How you would like that the history of the world could be these tangle lines, streets, places, worlds, individual stories. And you want to write an anonymous history of the world. And you decide that sooner or later you will write an anonymous history of the world.

Other attempts to belong to a new city

First fragment

You have taken a bus 89, 90… You don't remember anymore. You are going to the last stop. You want to know where the terminal station is. You are on the bus and you notice: Old ladies during the day; NEDs at night time. And sometimes both during the day: old ladies in the front part of the bus and NEDs full with i-pods and other technologies at the back. And you are in between those two worlds and you suddenly remember when your grandmother saw your i-pod for the first time and asked if it was a cigarette lighter. And you start wandering about the distance between those two worlds and how aware they are of the presence of each other and how they are related to each other?

Second fragment

One day you're on a bus and the bus driver suddenly stops. Nobody knows what's going on. He stopped driving. And it's then you realize that he doesn't know the way. He doesn't know the bus route. So, everybody who is on that bus, including you, is shouting the directions while he's driving, first left, straight forward…

Third fragment

Someone tells you the story of a man. Everyone thought he had killed his wife; and for his whole life he tried to prove that he didn't do it. He was being arrested and released all the time because there weren't enough proofs to convict him. She had been missing for 25 years. And one day, out of the blue, her children, now grownups, saw her working in a restaurant on the other side of the city. She had just run away. She had said she was going out to by fish and chips and never returned.

People are always criticising this city for one reason or another, because it's too cold, or it's too grey or has a lot of rubbish in the streets.
The truth is that you look at the map and this city is huge and now, you close your eyes and this city is smaller and smaller.
In this city all the streets are named after hard drugs no, all the streets are named after people who went mad, no all the streets are name after the monks who died in Burma, no, in this city all the streets are named after charity shops, no in this city all the streets are named after the oil tanks in the north sea. No in this city all the streets are named after cartoons characters: Corto Maltese Street, Calvin and Hobbes Square, Tintin alley, Obelix roundabout…

In this street at four o'clock in the morning there is always a Russian with a black leather jacket waiting at the corner of the street.
In this street at five o'clock in the morning there is always a couple of urban foxes eating from the trash bins.

In this street at six o'clock in the morning there is always a fat man leaving milk at the doors.

In this street at seven o'clock in the morning there is no one.

In this street at eight o'clock in the morning there is always a taxi collecting someone.

In this street at nine o'clock in the morning the postman brings one letter.

In this street at ten o'clock in the morning there is always a woman in a hurry with a trolley.

In this street at eleven o'clock there is always someone who throws a shoe from the window.

In this street at twelve o'clock in the afternoon there is always a car waiting with indicators flashing.

In this street at one o'clock in the afternoon there is always a slender good looking young boy running with his bicycle.

In this street at two o'clock in the afternoon there is always someone shouting at their mobile phone.

In this street at three o'clock in the afternoon there is always a girl singing to sell the 'Big Issue'.

In this street at four o'clock in the afternoon there is always a police car driving very slowly.

In this street at five o'clock in the afternoon an ice cream van passes.

In this street at six o'clock in the afternoon the fat milk man comes back collecting the money.

In this street at seven o'clock in the evening there is always a taxi dropping someone off.

In this street at eight o’clock in the evening there is always someone smoking at the window.

In this street at night o’clock in the evening there is always a Christmas tree flashing.

In this street at ten o’clock in the evening there is no one.

In this street at eleven o’clock there is always a drunken man shouting something very loud.

In this street at midnight there is no one.

In this street at one o’clock in the morning there is always someone whistling.

In this street at two o’clock in the morning there is always a group of people laughing and smoking.

In this street at three o’clock in the morning there is only one window with the lights on.

In this street at four o’clock in the morning there is always a Russian with a black leather jacket waiting at the corner of the street.